MA'ARIFUL QUR'AN

A Comprehensive commentary on the Holy Quran

Volume 3

By

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MA'ĀRIFUL-QUR'ĀN

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Volume 3

(Sūrah Al-Mā'idah, Al-An'ām & Al-A'rāf)

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TRANSLITERATION SCHEME

Arabic Letter	Name of Letter		English Transliteration
ا	الف	-- **Alif**	**a**
ب	باء	-- **bā**	**b**
ت	تاء	-- **tā**	**t**
ث	ثاء	-- **thā**	**th**
ج	جيم	-- **jīm**	**j**
ح	حاء	-- **ḥā**	**ḥ**
خ	خاء	-- **khā**	**kh**
د	دال	-- **dāl**	**d**
ذ	ذال	-- **dhāl**	**dh**
ر	راء	-- **rā**	**r**
ز	زای	-- **zā**	**z**
س	سين	-- **sīn**	**s**
ش	شين	-- **shīn**	**sh**
ص	صاد	-- **ṣād**	**ṣ**
ض	ضاد	-- **ḍād**	**ḍ**
ط	طاء	-- **ṭā**	**ṭ**
ظ	ظاء	-- **ẓā**	**ẓ**
ع	عين	-- **'ayn**	**'**
غ	غين	-- **ghayn**	**gh**
ف	فاء	-- **fā**	**f**
ق	قاف	-- **qāf**	**q**
ك	كاف	-- **kāf**	**k**
ل	لام	-- **lām**	**l**
م	ميم	-- **mīm**	**m**
ن	نون	-- **nūn**	**n**
ہ	هاء	-- **hā**	**h**
و	واؤ	-- **wāw**	**w**
ء	ہمزہ	-- **Hamzah**	**'**
ى	ياء	-- **yā**	**y**

Short Vowels

	: Fatḥah	a
	: Kasrah	i
	: Ḍammah	u

Long Vowels

ا	: Shortened Alif	ā
آ	: Maddah Alif	ā
ى	: Maddah Yā	ī
و	: Maddah Wāw	ū

Dipthongs

اى	:Alif and Yā	ay (also ai in some cases)
او اؤ	: Alif and Wāw	aw (also au in some cases)

Sūrah Al-Mā'idah

(The Repast)

[This Sūrah is Madinite (Madanī). It has 120 Verses and 16 Sections]

Verse 1

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ ۭ اُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيْمَةُ الْاَنْعَامِ اِلَّا مَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَاَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيْدُ ﴿۱﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful.

O those who believe, fulfill the contracts. The cattles have been made lawful for you, except that which shall be recited (mentioned) to you, provided that you do not treat hunting as lawful while you are in Iḥrām. Surely, Allah ordains what He wills. [1]

Background of revelation and a summary of subjects

This is the initial verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. As agreed upon, Sūrah al-Mā'idah is a Madanī (Madinite) Sūrah and also the last among all Madanī Chapters (Sūrah) so much so that some revered elders have identified this as the last Sūrah of the Qur'ān itself. On the authority of narrations from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar and Sayyidah Asmā' bint Yazīd, it appears in the Musnad of Aḥmad that Sūrah al-Mā'idah was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while in travel riding the she-camel named '*Aḍbā*'. As explained in the introduction to this *Tafsīr* in Volume 1, there used to be a sense of being under some heavy weight, extraordinary and unexplained, at a time the *Waḥy* (revelation) came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. So, this is what happened as customary. When the she-camel could bear the phenome-

non of unusual weight no more, he dismounted from her back. This journey is obviously the journey he made to perform his last Ḥajj as supported by some relevant reports. The Last Ḥajj took place in the tenth year of *Hijrah*. After his return from there, his blessed life in the mortal world lasted for about eighty more days. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, commentator Ibn Ḥayyān has said that some portions of Sūrah al-Mā'idah were revealed during the journey of Ḥudaybiyah, some others during the journey of the Conquest of Makkah and still others during the journey of the Last Ḥajj. This tells us that Sūrah al-Mā'idah has been revealed during the final stages of the revelation of the Qur'ān - though, it may not be the very last Sūrah.

Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī on the authority of Abū 'Ubaydh, cites a narration of ibn Ḥabīb and 'Aṭiyyah ibn Qays رضی اللہ عنہم اجمعین in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said:

المائدة من اخرالقران تنزيلا فاحلوا حلالها وحرموا حرامها

> Sūrah al-Mā'idah is from what has been revealed towards the last stage of the revelation of the Qur'ān. So, take what has been made lawful there as lawful for ever and take what has been made unlawful there as unlawful for ever.

Referring to Mustadrak al-Ḥākim, Ibn Kathīr cites a similar narration from Sayyidnā Jubayr ibn Nufayr in which he has been reported to have called upon Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی اللہ عنہا soon after Ḥajj. She asked him: "Do you read Sūrah al-Mā'idah, O Jubayr?" He submitted: "I do." Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah then said: "This is the last Sūrah of the Holy Qur'ān. The injunctions about things lawful and unlawful in it are *Muḥkam* (of established meaning). The probability of any abrogation (*Naskh*) does not exist there. So, be specially particular about them."

Like Sūrah Al-Nisā', Sūrah al-Mā'idah too carries many subsidiary injunctions relating to dealings and contracts. Accordingly, Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī notices subject homogeneity in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Āl-'Imrān because both of them mostly feature injunctions relating to Principles, Doctrines, Unicity, Prophethood, Doomsday and similar other basic concerns of importance. As for subsidiary injunctions, they appear there as corollaries. Regarding Sūrah al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it can be said that they are homogeneous subject-wise because both of

them describe subsidiary injunctions. Any description of basic principles appears there by implication. In Sūrah al-Nisā', emphasis has been laid on mutual dealings, particularly on rights servants of Allah have on each other (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*). Then, in it, there are details of the rights of the husband and the wife, the rights of orphans and the rights of the parents and other relatives. In the very first verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, there appears the instruction to stand by all dealings made and pledges given. The words of the Verse: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ (O those who believe, fulfill the contracts) command that all such commitments must be met. Therefore, Sūrah al-Mā'idah is also referred to as Sūrah al-'Uqūd (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

This Sūrah, specially its opening verse, has a special bearing on matters relating to mutual dealings and contractual agreements. Therefore, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم sent Sayyidnā 'Amru ibn Ḥazm as the '*Āmil* (Governor) of Yaman, he gave him a written decree of appointment at the head of which he had this verse written (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ).

Commentary

The first sentence of the first verse of this Sūrah is so comprehensive that its proper discussion would deservedly go beyond thousands of pages. In fact, Muslim scholars and jurists have done exactly that. The verse says: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ (O those who believe, fulfill the contracts). Here, the very form of address: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا (O those who believe ...) helps to divert attention to the very crucial nature of the subject for the command being given here is centrally required by one's faith. Then comes the command: اَوْفُوْا بِالْعُقُوْدِ (fulfill the contracts). The word, '*al-'uqūd*', used in the Qur'ān is the plural form of *al-'aqd*, the literal meaning of which is to tie. A contract which ties two individuals or groups to each other is also known as '*aqd*. Thus, *al-'uqūd* takes the meaning of *al-'uhūd* or contracts.

Commentator Ibn Jarīr has reported the consensus of revered exegetes among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* on this approach. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ explains that '*aqd* (contract) or '*ahd* (pledge) or *Mu'āhadah* (pact) are all applied to a transaction in which two parties have placed the responsibility of doing or not doing something on each other and to which both of them agree and are bound by. According to our recog-

nized practice, this is what a contractual agreement is. Therefore, the essential meaning of the sentence is: Take the fulfilling of mutual contracts to be binding and necessary.

Now, we have to determine the nature of contracts meant here. The interpretations of commentators appear to be different, though outwardly only. Some say that it refers to the Covenant of Allah under which His created beings are bound to believe in and obey Him, or they refer to pledges Allah has taken from His created beings regarding His revealed injunctions of things lawful and unlawful. This is what has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ. Others say that here it means the contracts people enter into with each other, such as, the Contract of Marriage and the Contract of Buying and Selling. Commentators Ibn Zayd and Zayd ibn Aslam have taken this very line of interpretation. Still others take contracts to mean sworn alliances and pacts which the tribes of *Jāhiliyyah* entered into with each other for mutual assistance when needed. This is also the position taken by Commentators such as Mujāhid, Rabī' and Qatādah. But, the truth is that there is no contradiction or difference in what they have said. Instead, all these varied contracts come under the Qur'ānic word, "*al-'uqūd*", appearing in this verse and the instruction to fulfill all of them comes from the Qur'ān itself.

Therefore, Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī has said that all kinds of contracts and binding agreements are included under the imperative of this word. He further divides these into three kinds as given below:

1. The Covenant which human beings have with their Creator who is Lord of all the worlds, such as, the pledge to believe in Him, to obey Him, or to observe the restrictions imposed by Him on matters and things lawful and unlawful.

2. The vow or promise or commitment one enters into with one's own self, such as, to commit to fulfill a vow (*nadhr*) for something, or to bind oneself on oath that something will be done.

3. The contract that one human being enters with another which includes all contracts which bind two persons or two groups or parties or governments.

So, in the light of this verse, strict adherence to all permissible pro-

visions and conditions which have been mutually agreed upon is mandatory and all parties must observe and fulfill these. This covers all international pacts and treaties between governments, bilateral agreements, all commitments, alliances, charters between groups and parties, also all sorts of contracts and deals between two human beings ranging from marriage, business, partnership, leasing, gift deed to many other bi-partite human dealings. Please note that the restriction of 'permissible' imposed a little earlier has a reason, for entering into a contract against the dictates of the Sharī'ah, or accepting it, is not permissible for anyone.

The Logic of the Lawful

After the initial declaration of the general rule in the first sentence of the verse, its particular details appear in the second sentence where it has been said: أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيْمَةُ الْاَنْعَامِ (The cattle have been made lawful for you ...). The word, *'bahīmah'*(بهيمة) used here is applied to animals usually considered to be devoid of understanding because people usually do not understand their speech which thus remains obscure. Imām al-Sha'rānī says: The name *'bahīmah'* is not given to an animal just because it has no sense and everything sensible remains obscure for it - as people commonly think. But, the truth is that no animal or beast, not even trees and rocks, can be taken to be devoid of sense as such - of course, subject to the difference in its degrees. They do not have the same measure of sense as human beings do. This is the reason why human beings have been obligated to observe the percepts and injunctions revealed for them. Animals have not been so obligated, otherwise Allah has given to every animal sense and awareness within the limits of its needs - even to all trees and rocks, for that matter. This is why everything glorifies Allah in its own way: وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهٖ : That is, 'there is nothing which does not but glorify Him with His praise' (17:44). How then, without sense, would it have ever recognized its creator and master and how would it have, thus, been able to engage in the act of glorifying Allah?

The word, *'al-An'ām'*, used in the text is the plural form of *na'am* (grazing livestock). Eight kinds of domestic animals or cattles such as the camel, the cow, the buffalow, the goat which have been described in Sūrah al-An'ām are called the An'ām. Since the word, *'bahīmah'*

(animal) was general, the word, 'Al-An'ām' (the cattle) has made it particular. So, the meaning of the verse comes to be that 'eight kinds of domestic animals have been made lawful for you.' Under the discussion about the word, *'al-'uqūd'*, you have already read a little earlier that it includes all kinds of contracts. One of these is the pledge Allah Almighty has taken from His created beings that they would observe the restrictions of the lawful and the unlawful. The present sentence is refering to this particular pledge when it says that Allah has made the cattle lawful for you and they can be eaten after having been slaughtered in accordance with the Islamic manner.

Thus believers have been exhorted to obey this injunction by staying within its limits. They should not take it upon themselves, as do the fire-worshippers and the idolators, to declare the very slaughter of these animals as absolutely unlawful, for this is raising an objection against the wisdom of the Creator and certainly an open ingratitude for His blessing. Nor should they become like some other meat-eating people who would, totally unfettered, go about eating all sorts of animals. Rather than do something like that, believers must eat from animals Allah Almighty has made lawful to eat under the Law given by Him. Similarly, they should abstain from animals which have been declared unlawful to eat. The reason is that Allah Almighty is the Creator of the Universe. He knows the nature and the properties of all animals and He is also aware of the effects they bring about when in the human body. He, in His grace, makes what is good and pure openly lawful for human consumption, things which leave no ill effects on physical health and moral strength. Similarly, He forbids unclean and impure animals which are either harmful for human health or contribute metabolically into the generation of evil morals. Therefore, there are a few things exempted from this general rule. These are as follows:

1. The first exemption is contained in: إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ It means: Except animals which have been declared unlawful in the Qur'ān, that is, dead animal or the swine.

2. The other exemption appears in: غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَأَنتُمْ حُرُمٌ . It means: Quadruped animals are lawful for you and wild game too. But, in the state when you have entered into the garments of *Iḥrām* with the in-

tention of doing Ḥajj or 'Umrah, hunting becomes a crime and sin. Stay away from it.

Living under the Authority and Wisdom of the Creator

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيْدُ which means that Allah Almighty ordains what He wills. Nobody has the right to ask questions or take exception in obeying it. This statement is perhaps indicative of an element of wisdom - that the permission given to human beings to slaughter and eat some animals is no act of injustice. The Creator and Master who has made all these life forms is also the One who has formulated, in His perfect wisdom and insight, the law that the lower form shall be the sustenance of the higher. The soil of the earth is food for trees and trees are food for animals and animals are food for human beings. There is no higher form of creation in this world, therefore, human beings cannot become food for anyone.

Verse 2

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ لَا تُحِلُّوا۟ شَعَٰٓئِرَ ٱللَّهِ وَلَا ٱلشَّهْرَ ٱلْحَرَامَ وَلَا
ٱلْهَدْىَ وَلَا ٱلْقَلَٰٓئِدَ وَلَآ ءَآمِّينَ ٱلْبَيْتَ ٱلْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِّن
رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَٰنًا ۚ وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَٱصْطَادُوا۟ ۚ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَـَٔانُ
قَوْمٍ أَن صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ ٱلْمَسْجِدِ ٱلْحَرَامِ أَن تَعْتَدُوا۟ ۘ وَتَعَاوَنُوا۟
عَلَى ٱلْبِرِّ وَٱلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا۟ عَلَى ٱلْإِثْمِ وَٱلْعُدْوَٰنِ ۚ
وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ۖ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ شَدِيدُ ٱلْعِقَابِ ﴿٢﴾

O those who believe, do not violate (the sanctity) of the Marks of Allah, nor of the sacred month, nor of the sacrificial animal, nor of the garlands, nor of those proceeding to the Sacred House, seeking the grace of their Lord, and Pleasure. When you are out of Iḥrām, you may hunt. And malice against a people for their having prevented you from al-Masjid al-Ḥarām, should not cause you to cross the limits. Help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is severe at punishment. [2]

Linkage of Verses

The first verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah emphasized the fulfillment of contracts. Included among these contracts is the contract or pledge to abide by the restrictions of the lawful and the unlawful as ordained by Allah Almighty. The second verse cited here describes two important articles of this contract. The first relates to the sanctity of the signs, symbols or hallmarks of Allah with the specific instruction to stay away from desecrating them. The second article recommends an even-handed dispension of justice to everyone, your own or not your own, friend or foe, which has been combined with a corresponding prohibition of any counter injustice inflicted in return for some injustice done.

Background

There are some events which form the background of the revelation of these verses. Let us go to them first so that the subject of the verse becomes fully clear to us. One of these is the event of Hudaybiyah the details of which have been taken up by the Holy Qur'ān elsewhere. This relates to the sixth year of Hijrah when the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his noble Companions decided to perform 'Umrah.

The Holy Prophet ﷺ entered into the *Iḥrām* of 'Umrah with more than one thousand of his Companions and left for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah. After having reached Ḥudaybiyah close to Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah, he sent a message to the Makkans that he was coming in with his group to perform 'Umrah and not for any aggressive designs. He requested that they be allowed to perform 'Umrah. The disbelievers of Makkah, not only that they refused it, they put forward many hard conditions and challenged them to agree to a treaty which stipulated that all Muslims will undo their *Iḥrām* they were in at that time and go back. When they come next year to perform their 'Umrah, they would be required to come without any arms, stay for three days only, perform 'Umrah and leave. Besides these conditions, there were many others agreeing to which was obviously very much against the self-respect of Muslims. But, obeying the orders of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, everyone returned in peace. After that, it was in the month of Dhu-al-Qa'dah of the Ḥijrah year 7 that this missed 'Umrah was performed again with full observance of the conditions imposed under the Treaty.

However, the events at Ḥudaybiyah and the insulting conditions

imposed there had planted seeds of discord in the hearts of the Companions against the disbelievers of Makkah. Then there came up the other incident when Ḥātim ibn Hind, one of the disbelievers of Makkah, came to Madīnah al-Tayyibah with his trading goods. After having sold his goods, he left his baggage and his attendant outside Madīnah and came to visit the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and expressed his desire to enter the fold of Islam, in all hypocricy, so that Muslims are satisfied. But, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had, well before he came to him, told his Companions on the strength of revelation that a man was coming to them who would talk in the words of the Satan. And when he went away, he said that the man came with disbelief and returned with deception and treason. Leaving the company of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, this man went straight out of Madīnah where the livestock of the people of Madīnah were grazing. He drove them away with him. The noble Companions came to know about this somewhat late. When they went out after him, he was gone out of their reach. Then it was in the seventh year of Ḥijrah, when they were going with the Holy Prophet ﷺ to perform the *Qaḍā'* of 'Umrah they had missed at Ḥudaybiyah, they heard someone reciting Talbiyyah at some distance. When they looked, they discovered that the same Ḥātim ibn Hind who had decamped with the animals belonging to the people of Madīnah was right there going for 'Umrah with the same animals going with him as sacrificial animals. At that time, the noble Companions thought of attacking him and taking their animals back by killing him off right there.

The third event came to pass in the eighth year of Ḥijrah when Makkah al-Mukarramah was conquered in Ramaḍān al-Mubārak and the entire Arabian peninsula came under Islamic rule. The disbelievers of Makkah were set free by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم without any revenge. They went about doing everything they used to do with complete freedom to the extent that they even kept observing their pagan customs of Ḥajj and 'Umrah too. At that time some noble Companions thought of taking their revenge for what had happened at Ḥudaybiyah. These people had stopped them from doing 'Umrah to which they were entitled on all counts, as permissible and justified. Why, they thought, should they now allow their Ḥajj and 'Umrah on any count which were all impermissible and unjustified? Why not attack

them, take their animals and finish them off?

These events have been narrated by Ibn Jarīr on the authority of 'Ikrimah and al-Suddi. It was on the basis of some of these events that the present verse was revealed. Through it, Muslims were told that holding the signs of Allah in esteem was their own bounden duty. Malice and hostility against an enemy was no reason to disturb this standing rule. This was absolutely impermissible. Even fighting during the sacred months was not permissible. Also not permissible was stopping sacrificial animals from reaching the Ḥaram or taking them away forcibly. As for the disbelievers who have donned the *Ihram* garments and who, in their estimation, have embarked on their pilgrimage to seek the good pleasure of Allah Almighty (though, because of their disbelief, this is a mistaken notion, yet) the sanctity of the signs of Allah demands that they should not be confronted in any way. Then there was the case of people who had stopped Muslims from performing their 'Umrah. Any effort to avenge their past hostility against Muslims in the form of Muslims stopping them from entering into Makkah or from performing their rites of Ḥajj was not permissible. This is so because this amounts to Muslims doing an injustice in return for an injustice to them which was not permissible in Islam. We can now go to a detailed explanation of the verse.

Commentary

The first sentence of the Verse says: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحِلُّوْا شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ (O those who believe, do not violate [the sanctity of] the Marks of Allah). Here the word, *Sha'ā'ir* has been translated as 'Marks.' This is the plural form of *Sha'īrah* which means mark, sign or symbol. Therefore, *Sha'ā'ir* and *Sha'īrah* signify things perceptible through the senses which symbolize something. As such the Marks (*Sha'ā'ir*) of Islam would be deeds and actions recognized as symbolic of one's being Muslim in faith. These are quite common such as *Ṣalāh, Adhān,* Ḥajj, Circumcision and Beard in accordance with the *Sunnah*. The *Tafsīr* or explanation of the Qur'ānic expression شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ (*Sha'ā'irullāh*: The Marks of Allah) as it appears in this verse has been reported in varying words. But, the clearest of them is what has been reported from Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and 'Aṭā' on whom both be the mercy of Allah. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ finds their statement as a compedium of all explanations. According

to this statement, "*Sha'a'irullah*" means all obligations the limits of which have been set forth by the Sharī'ah of Islam. In this verse, the essence of the meaning is that one should not violate the sanctity of the marks of Allah. One form of such violation could be a total dismissal of what one has been obligated with. Under the second form, one may act in accordance with these obligations by electing to obey some injunctions and leave out others ending up with a compliance which remains incomplete. A third form could be that one starts transgressing the appointed limits and keeps going farther beyond. The Qur'ānic statement: لَاتُحِلُّوْا شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ (do not violate [the sanctity of] the Marks of Allah) forbids all these three forms.

The Holy Qur'ān gives the same instruction elsewhere in a different mode as follows:

وَمَنْ يُّعَظِّمْ شَعَآئِرَ اللّٰهِ فَاِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوْبِ

And whoever exalts the Marks of Allah, then this is from the fear of Allah in hearts. (22:32)

The part of the sentence which follows in the verse under study gives details of a particular kind of the Marks of Allah, that is, the Marks that concern the rites of Ḥajj.

The text says:

وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَآئِدَ وَلَآ آمِّيْنَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا

It means: Do not violate its sanctity by fighting and killing during the months in which it is prohibited. This refers to the four months during which mutual fighting was legally prohibited. They are Dhul-Qa'dah, Dhul-Ḥijjah, Muḥarram and Rajab. Later on, this injunction was abrogated as agreed under the overwhelming consensus of '*Ulamā*'. In addition to this, command was given that there should be no violation of the sanctity of sacrificial animals within the Ḥaram of Makkah, specially of the band round their necks placed there as a symbol of sacrifice. One form of violating the sanctity of these animals could be that they are stopped from reaching the Ḥaram or are snatched away. The second form could be that of using the animals for a purpose other than sacrifice, such as using them to ride or milk. The

verse has declared all these form as impermissible.

The text then prohibits the violation of the sanctity of those who have left their homes to embark on a journey to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* with the intention of performing Ḥajj - for their purpose on this journey is to seek the blessing and pleasure of their Lord. Not violating the sanctity of such people means that they should neither be stopped during their journey nor should any pain be caused to them.

After that it was said: وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا. It means: And when you get released from the *Iḥrām*, you may hunt. In other words, the limit of the prohibition of hunting during the state of *Iḥrām* appearing in the first verse has been declared by saying that your release from the *Iḥrām* neuteralizes the in-*Iḥrām* prohibition of hunting which has now become permissible.

Being deliniated in the verse under reference is a particular part of the contract which is operative between every human being and the Lord of all the worlds. Some of it has already been identified upto this point. The first out of these is the instruction to uphold the invoilable dignity of the Marks of Allah as sacrosanct and to guard against any chances of their being desecrated. Then come some details concerning the Marks of Allah which belong to Ḥajj. Here, the instruction given is that nothing should be done to stop them and that effort should be made to stay away from any action which desecrates them.

The statement which follows after that takes up the second part of the contract in the following words: وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَآنُ قَوْمٍ أَنْ صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَنْ تَعْتَدُوا It means: There were those people who had stopped you from entering Makkah and performing your 'Umrah and after that event at Hudaybiyah, you were returning all sad and angered. Now that you have power in your hands, let things not turn in a way that you start taking revenge for what happened in the past by stopping them from entering the House of Allah and the Sacred Mosque and performing their Ḥajj - because this is injustice and Islam does not favour avenging injustice by inflicting counter injustice. Instead of that, it teaches the doing of justice in return for injustice done and upholding it under all odds. It is true that those people, under the sway of their power and position at that time, had stopped Muslims from entering the Sacred Mosque and performing 'Umrah, quite unjustly indeed. But, the

retaliation for this injustice can hardly be that Muslims now go about using their power to stop them from carrying out their Ḥajj rites.

The Qur'ān teaches that friend and foe should be treated equally on the scale of justice. It commands Muslims to do nothing but justice as a matter of obligation, no matter how deadly the enemy and no matter how serious the pain inflicted. That Islam guards the rights of enemies is certainly one of the peculiar qualities of Islam which does not answer one injustice by another, rather elects to do justice in return.

The Qur'ānic Principle of Mutual Cooperation and Assistance

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ .

> And help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is severe at punishment.

This is the last sentence of the second verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Here, the Holy Qur'ān has given such a wise verdict on an elemental question of human life that it can be confidently taken as the moving spirit behind any reliable world order on which depends the prosperity and survival of all human beings. As such, acting in accordance with the Qur'ānic principle of Mutual Cooperation and Assistance is the only way to the betterment of the human beings. Every sensible person already realizes that things get done in our world through the cooperative efforts of all human beings. This is how the system keeps running. A solitary person, no matter how smart, powerful or rich, cannot procure what he needs to sustain his life single-handedly. One lone person cannot go through all the stages of growing and processing his ready-to-eat food, nor can he cope up with the countless steps required in growing cotton, manufacturing cloth and having a dress prepared to fit his measurements, nor can he move his things from one place to the other. Thus, it is not difficult to see that every human being needs hundreds and thousands of others to run his life. This mutual cooperation of theirs is what keeps the whole system going. Incidentally, this cooperation is not limited to the life of the world of our experience, it is also needed in the stages from death to burial - even

beyond, when one remains depending upon those he left behind and who may pray for his forgiveness and do things the reward of which keeps reaching him after his death.

Great is the majesty of Allah who, in His perfect wisdom and power, set up such a formidable system of this world, a system where every human being needs the other. The poor man needs the rich while the richest of the rich need the poor worker to handle jobs with labour and skill. The traders need consumers and consumers need traders. The home owner needs a team of technicians having expertise in many areas in order to build a house and they, in turn, need him. If this universal element of need was not there and mutual assistance remained dependant on moral superiority of persons and parties, just imagine who would have been working for whom. The whole thing would have fallen flat for we have been seeing what has happened to common moral virtues and ethical values in this world of ours. Even if this division of labour could have been enforced as some law made by some government or international organization, the fate it would have met would have been no different than the fate of all sorts of laws proliferating the many national and international forums of the world where the law rests at peace in acts while the bazars and offices are run by shadow laws of bribery, nepotism, neglect of duty and apathy of application. We have to salute the framework of doing things given to us by the wisest of the wise, the power of the powers, who placed in the hearts of people of different inclinations to have the ability and desire to run their lives with a particular line of work as its pivot. Had it been otherwise and some international organization or a government chose to assign fields of work among people making someone a carpenter, others iron-mongers or janitors or managers of water and food supplies, who would have become so obedient to such commands from governments and institutions as to sacrifice all personal considerations and jump right into the line of work chosen for them?

So, it is Allah Almighty who has put into man's heart the inclination towards and liking for whatever work or role for which He has created him. Now he takes the service he is doing as his lifework without any legal compulsion and it is through this that he earns his living. The end product of this firmly established system is that all

human needs are easily satisfied at the cost of small cash. It may be ready-to-eat food or ready-to-wear clothes or ready-to-use furniture or a turn-key home - one can buy all this at some affordable price. Without the benefit of this system, even a billionare would have failed to acquire a single grain of wheat despite being ready to stake all his wealth. In order to visualize the outcome of this natural system, think of one of your stays in a hotel where you enjoy the benefit of so many things without blinking. Only if you were to analyse how this works, you will notice that the food you eat there is comprised of courses featuring eatables and seasonings from many countries, china and cutlery and furniture from many more, and managers, chefs and stewards from still others. The tiny morsel of food which reaches your mouth is the result of the combined contribution of millions of machines, animals and human beings - and it is only after that, that you have been able to pamper your palate. Take another example. You come out of the house to go to some place a few miles away. You may either cannot walk all that distance or you do not have the time to do so. You find a taxi cab or a bus nearby without realizing that these vehicles have been assembled with components from many parts of the world and with drivers and conductors from as many. What things and what people stand there to wait on you and serve you! Just pay the fare and be on your way! No government has forced them to provide these for you. Working behind this scheme of things is the natural law ingrained into the human heart as a creational imperative by none but the great master of all hearts Himself.

Not far is the example of what the socialist countries did when they did away with this natural arrangement by taking over the function of telling people what they will do in their lives. In order to do this, they had to, first of all, do away with human freedom through coercion and injustice resulting in the killing and imprisonment of thousands and thousands of people. Those who remained behind were coerced into working like the parts of a machine, as a result of which, it can be conceded that production did increase at some places, but it must also be granted at the same time that this increase came at the cost of a gross demolition of the free choice of human beings. Thus, the deal did not turn out to be economical. Look at the natural arrangement in contrast. Here, everyone is free and restricted at the same

time - restricted in the sense of being devoted to particular jobs and roles on the basis of natural dispension of dispositions. Since this restriction or compulsion comes from nowhere but from natural disposition, nobody feels being coerced. People who would themselves come forward to do the toughest labour or the most menial job, people who would even make efforts to get such jobs, are found everywhere during all times. The same people would, if a government started forcing them to do these jobs, just start running away from it enmasse.

In a nutshell, the universal world order revolves round mutual cooperation. But, let us not forget the other side of the picture which is very much there. For example, if this mutual cooperation were to be seriously practiced to carry out activities of crime, theft, robbery, killing and vandalization resulting in big, powerful and organized associations of thieves and robbers, then, this very mutual cooperation can destroy the whole system. This tells us that mutual cooperation is a two-edged sword which cannot only hurt you but it can also knock out the universal order of things. Since the world we live in a mix of good and bad, it was not unlikely that people would start using the power of mutual cooperation to infest human society with crimes, killings, destruction and general loss. Incidentally, this is no more a matter of likelihood, instead, it is an open fact of life for the whole world to see. Thus, it was as a reaction to this situation that theorists of the world laid the foundation of groups and nations based on different ideologies in order to have security for themselves. The idea was to use the power of mutual cooperation in favour of a particular group or people by offering an allied defence against another group or people who attacked them.

The Formation of Separate Nations

According to 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahristānī in Al-Milal-wa-al-Nihal, in the beginning when human population was not much, four nations came into being in terms of East, West, North and South. People living in each of these directions started taking themselves as one nation while taking others as other nations. And it was on this basis that they established their mutual cooperation. Later, when the population of the world became larger, the idea of nationalism and multilaterism on the basis of geneology, family ties and tribal affiliations became a

working principle among peoples of all directions. The whole system of Arabia rested on the basis of such tribal and geneological affinities, so much so that these were sufficient grounds to go to wars against each other. Banū Hāshim was one nation, Banū Tamīm was another and Banū Khuzā'ah still another. Among the Hindus in India, this division on the basis of the high caste and the low caste still persists unchanged.

The modern period of European nations did nothing to retain their geneological distinction, nor did they give any credence to the geneological peculiarities of the rest of the world. When they gained ascendency in the world, all geneological and tribal groupings were eliminated, separate nations were raised on the basis of regions, provinces, homelands and languages - almost by placing a piece of humanity on each such altar. The fact is that this is the form that prevails in most parts of the world. The limit is that Muslims too - of all the peoples the least likely - fell a victim to this modern voodoo of community organization. As if the division as Arabs, Turks, Iraqis and Sindhis were not enough, they went on dividing and sub-dividing themselves into Egyptians, Syrians, Hijazis, Najdis, Panjabis, Bangalis, and so many others who started identifying themselves as separate nations or nationalities or peoples. Since all affairs of their governments were run on this basis, regional or provincial prejudice went deep into their response patterns and peoples of all regions or provinces began relating to each other on this basis - that became their idea of mutual cooperation.

The Teaching of the Qur'ān about Nationalism and Universalism

Then came the Holy Qur'ān reminding human beings of the lesson they had forgotten. The initial verses of Sūrah al-Nisā' clearly declared that all human beings are the children of one father and mother. The noble Prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم made this all the more clear when he publicly announced during the famous address of his last Ḥajj that no Arab is superior to a non-Arab nor a white to a black. Superiority depends on nothing but *Taqwā*, on the fear of Allah and obedience to Him. It was this teaching of the Qur'ān which gave the call of "إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ" (Believers are brothers - 49:10) and it was in

one stroke that the jet blacks of Ethiopea were related to the reds of Turkey and Byzantium and the lineally less endowed non-Arabs to the Qurayshī and Hashmī Arabs as brothers to each other. The concept of nation and brotherhood was established on the basis that those who believe in Allah and His *Rasūl* are one nation and those who do not so believe are the other. It was this foundation which cut asunder the family ties of Abū Jahl and Abū Lahab from the noble Prophet ﷺ while joining it with Sayyidnā Bilāl from Ethiopea and Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb from Byzantium. Finally, came the proclamation of the Qur'ān: خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ (64:2). It means that Allah created all human beings, then, they split in two groups - some became disbelievers and some others became believers. A practical demonstration of this Qur'ānic classification was visible during the battles of Badr, Uḥud, Aḥzāb and Hunayn when a blood brother who elected to stay away from the obedience of Allah and His *Rasūl* found that his bond of mutual cooperation with his believing brother stood severed and he could no longer escape the stroke of his believing brother's sword.

Stated in the verse of the Qur'ān cited above: وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوٰى وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ is this very principle of mutual cooperation and assistance. Being so reasonable and correct, it exhorts people to cooperate in deeds which are righteous and matters which are motivated by the fear of Allah and forbids them from extending their cooperation to anything sinful and aggressive. Just consider that the noble Qur'ān has not suggested here that one should cooperate with Muslim brothers and not with non-Muslims. Instead of that, it declares that righteousness and the fear of Allah are the bases on which cooperation is to be extended for this is the real foundation on which rests any cooperation among Muslims themselves. It clearly means that no help is to be extended even to a Muslim brother if he is acting contrary to truth or is advancing towards injustice and aggression. Rather than help him in what is false and unjust, effort should be made to hold his hands against indulging in the false and the unjust for this, in reality, is helping him at its best - so that his present life as well as his life in the Hereafter is not ruined.

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Anas appearing in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been

reported to have said: 'انصر اخاك ظالما اومظلوما' (That is: Help your brother, just or unjust). His Companions who were soaked in the teaching of the Qur'ān were surprised. They asked: '*Yā Rasūl Allah* (O Messenger of Allah) as for helping the oppressed brother, that we understand. But, what does 'helping the oppressor' mean?' He said: 'Stop him from doing injustice - this is helping him.'

This teaching of the Qur'ān helped establish that righteousness (*birr*) and the fear of Allah (*Taqwā*) are the real criterions on which it raised the edifice of Muslim nationalism and to which it invited the peoples of the world as the common denominator of mutual cooperation and assistance. Contrary to this were sin and aggression (*ithm* and '*udwān*) which were declared to be serious crimes and cooperation in these was prohibited. To describe the positive criterions, two separate words of *Birr* and *Taqwā* were used. According to a consensus of commentators, the word, *Birr* at this place means the doing of deeds which are good. This has been translated here as righteousness. The word, *Taqwā* means abstinence from what is evil. The word, *Ithm* has been used here in an absolute sense meaning sin and disobedience, whether it relates to rights or acts of worship. As for '*Udwān*, it lexically means the crossing of limits, that is, injustice and aggression.

About cooperating in what is righteousness and the fear of Allah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: الدال على الخير كفاعله which means: The reward of the person who shows someone the path of righteousness is very much the same as if it was taken personally. Ibn Kathīr has reported this ḥadīth with reference to al-Bazzār. In addition to that, it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said that whoever invites people to true guidance and righteous conduct shall receive a reward equal to all those who would heed to the call and act right - without the least cut from the reward of such people. As for the one who invites people to the path of error or sin, he or she will be earning the same amount of sin fully equal to the sins of all those who got involved with the filth of sin because of the inviter to sin - without any decrease in the count of such sins.

Citing Ṭabarānī, reports Ibn Kathīr: The Holy Prophet ﷺ said that anyone who joins up with an unjust person to assist him goes out of the fold of Islam. It is on the basis of this guidance that the righteous

elders of the community have strictly abstained from accepting any office or service in the courts of unjust rulers - for this amounts to assisting them in their acts of injustice. Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, while explaining the noble verse: فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْمُجْرِمِينَ : 'I will never be a helper for the criminals - 28:17', has reported a ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said that a call will go forth on the Day of Judgement citing the oppressors and the unjust and their helpers, so much so that all those who have handled chores even as insignificant as setting up the pens and inkpots of the unjust and the oppressive will all be rammed into a steel coffin and thrown into the Hell.

This is the teaching of the Qur'ān and Sunnah which aimed at spreading the virtues of righteousness, justice, sympathy and good-mannerliness throughout the world by presenting every single individual of the community as a living herald and model of the truth. And conversely, in order to eradicate crimes, injustices and oppressions, the same teaching had converted every member of the community into a kind of soldier who was bound to do his duty under all circumstances, whether watched or unwatched - because of the fear of Allah in his heart. The whole world saw the outcome of this wise teaching and grooming during the blessed period of the noble Companions and their Successors. Even in our day, when war threatens a certain country, departments of civil defence are established which impart some level of training for all its citizens. But, nothing of the sort gets done when it comes to the eradication of crimes, to making people promoters of good and blockers of evil. It is obvious that an objective like this cannot be achieved by military parades or civil defence exercises. This is the ultimate art of living which can only be learnt and practiced in educational institutions which, unfortunately, seem to have become strangers to spiritual and social refinements. This is very much true about the great qualities of righteousness and the fear of Allah which seem to be all banned in modern day educational institutions while the admittance of sin and high-handedness is all too open. What can the police do when a whole people throw away the concerns of the lawful and the unlawful and the right and the wrong on their backs and turn crime-oriented? Today we see the graph of crime rising high - theft, robbery, sexual offences, killings and destructions are taking place everywhere. That the legal machinery can do nothing to root out

these crimes is because of their failure to take advantage of the Qur'ānic solution suggested above, that is, the governments are far removed from this Qur'ānic system, and that they, particularly those who hold power into their hands, demur from adopting the principle of righteousness and the fear of Allah as the aim of their life - even though they have to face a thousand other hardships as a result of such avoidance. It may be interesting if such deviationists would swallow their pride at least for once, even if this be on a trial basis. Let them, then, witness the spectacle of the power of Allah and how it blesses them and their people with good life filled with the best of peace and comfort.

On the other side, there were the masses of people who took it for granted that the eradication of crimes is the exclusive responsibility of the government. In fact, they have become used to keeping crimes covered up. The idea of coming up with true witnesses to confirm truth and eliminate crime is no more a favoured practice among them. Such people must understand that covering up the crime of the criminal and avoiding to put their witness on record is an abetment of crime which, according to the Holy Qur'ān, is *Ḥarām* (unlawful) and a grave sin indeed. Furthermore, it is also a flagrant disobedience of the Divine command: وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ (And help each other in righteousness and piety, and do not help each other in sin and aggression) (5:2).

Verse 3

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى النُّصُبِ وَأَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوا بِالْأَزْلَامِ ذَٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ الْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ الْيَوْمَ أَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِإِثْمٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣﴾

Prohibited for you are: the carrion, the blood, the flesh

of swine, and what has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah, and the animals dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring, and that which a beast has eaten unless you have properly slaughtered it; and that which has been slaughtered before the idols and that you determine shares through the arrows. This is sin.

Today those who disbelieve have lost hopes of (damaging) your faith. So, do not fear them, and fear Me. Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My blessing upon you, and chosen Islam as *Dīn* for you. But whoever is compelled by severe hunger with no way out, having no inclination, then Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [3]

Commentary

This is the third verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah where a number of fundamental and subsidiary injunctions and rulings have been described. The first problem relates to lawful and unlawful animals. As for animals whose meat is harmful for human beings - whether physically, for it may pose the danger of disease in the human body, or spiritually, for it may hold the danger of spoilage in human morals or its many emotional states - these the Qur'ān has classed as evil declaring them to be unlawful. Then there are animals which have no physical or spiritual harmfulness, these the Qur'ān has declared to be good, pure and lawful.

The first prohibition in this verse is that of dead animals. These refer to animals which die without having been slaughtered, either because of some sickness or because of their natural death. The meat of such dead animals is extremely harmful for human consumption, not simply 'medically', but spiritually as well.

However, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has exempted fish and locust as reported in *Aḥādīth* narrated in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Ibn Mājah, Dārquṭnī and al-Baihaqī and elsewhere.

The second thing declared unlawful in this verse is blood. By saying: أَوْ دَمًا مَّسْفُوحًا (Or, flowing blood - 6:145) in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān, it was made clear that blood here means blood which flows. For this reason, liver and spleen, despite being blood, stand exempted

from the purview of this injunction. The *Ḥadīth* referred to a little earlier where fish and locust have been exempted from the purview of '*Maitah*' or carrion also carries the exemption of liver and spleen from the definition of blood.

The third thing declared unlawful is the flesh of swine. '*Laḥm*' or flesh means the whole body of the swine which includes fat, ligaments, everything.

The fourth prohibition is that of an animal which has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah (dedicated in this manner, or slaughtered). And, at the time of slaughtering it as well, the act of invoking any name other than that of Allah will amount to flagrant Shirk, which is the ascribing of partners, sharers or associates in the pure divinity of Allah. This animal, thus slaughtered, shall fall under the injunction of a dead animal with the consensus of Muslim jurists. This is what was done by the disbelievers of Arabia when they slaughtered animals invoking the name of their idols, or as some ignorant people would do when they would slaughter animals in the name of some saint or savant. It is also possible that someone does invoke the name of Allah at the time of slaughtering but actually offers it for one other than Allah making that sacrifice for the pleasure of whatever that non-Allah is. If so, this too, according to a consensus of Muslim jurists, is unlawful under the injunction of : مَآ اُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهٖ (what has been invoked upon with [a name] other than that of Allah).

The fifth category made unlawful is that of an animal which has been strangulated to death, or which has choked itself to death while struggling out of some trap. Though *Munkhaniqah* (dead by strangulation) and *Mawqūdhah* (dead by blow) are included under the broad Qur'ānic term of '*Maitah*'(carrion), but they have been mentioned here particularly because the people of *Jāhiliyyah* took them to be permissible.

The sixth category of animals is *Mawqūdhah* (dead by blow). It means an animal which has been killed by some hard blow, the kind of blow that comes from being hit by a staff, rod or rock. Should an arrow strike and kill its game in a manner that the arrow does not hit it with the sharp arrow head but does end up killing it just the same from the force of the blow itself, then, this too will be counted as *Maw-*

qūdhah and will, as such, be unlawful. Sayyidnā 'Adī ibn Ḥātim رضی اللہ عنہ said to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم : 'There are times when I hunt with an arrow heavy in the middle. If the game is killed with this arrow, can I eat it?' He said: 'If the animal has been killed by a blow from the heavy side of the arrow, it is included under *Mawqūdhah* - do not eat it (and if it has been hit by the sharp-edged point and it has wounded the game, then, you can eat it). Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has reported this narration in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān citing his own chain of authorities. Here, the condition is that the arrow should have been released from the bow after having said *Bismillāh*.

The game killed by a gun bullet has also been ruled by Muslim Jurists as included under the category of '*Mawqūdhah*' and is, therefore, unlawful. Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ reports from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar that he used to say: المقتولة بالبندقة تلك الموقوذة which means that an animal killed by gun shot is the '*Mawqūdhah*'; therefore, it is unlawful. Imāms Abū Ḥanīfah, Shāfi'ī, Mālik and others are all in agreement with this view (al-Qurṭubī).

The seventh category is called '*al-Mutaraddiyah*' (killed by a fall). It means that an animal which dies by falling from a mountain, mound or a high building, or which dies by falling into a well or some similar depth is also unlawful. Therefore, says a report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd: If you see a game standing on top of a mountain and you shoot your arrow at it after reciting *Bismillāh* and the hit of the arrow causes the game to fall down and die, then, do not eat it.

Because, here too, the probability exists that the animal did not die with a hit from the arrow. May be, it died from the shock of the fall - if so, it will be counted under the category of '*Mutaraddiyah*' (dead by a fall). Similarly, if an arrow is shot at a bird and it falls down in water, its eating has also been prohibited for the same reason that probability exists that the hunted bird had died by drowning (al-Jaṣṣāṣ).

It should also be noted that Sayyidnā 'Adiyy ibn Ḥātim too has reported the same ruling from the Holy Prophet ﷺ - (al-Jaṣṣāṣ).

The eighth category is that of '*An-Naṭīḥah*' (dead by goring). It refers to an animal which has died in some collision such as by bumping against a train or vehicle, or it has been gored by butting against an-

other animal.

The ninth category is of an animal which died when torn apart by some beast.

After describing the unlawfulness of these nine categories, an exception has been mentioned. It was said: إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ. It means: If you find any of these animals alive and you slaughter it properly, then, it becomes lawful - eating it is permissible.

This exemption cannot be applied to the first four categories, because in *Maitah* (carrion) and *Dam* (blood), the very possibility does not exist; and as for *Khinzīr* (swine) and what falls under مَآ أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ : *mā uhilla li-ghayrillāh* (what has been invoked upon with [a name] other than that of Allah), they are unlawful in themselves - slaughtering or not slaughtering them is equally irrelevant. Therefore, there is a consensus of Sayyidnā 'Alī, Ibn 'Abbās, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Qatādah and other righteous elders on the view that this exemption applies to categories after the first four, that is, to the '*Munkhaniqah*' (dead by strangulation) and what comes after it. So, it comes to mean that, should the animal be found alive under all these circumstances with commonly discernable signs of life, and slaughtered with the name of Allah while in the same condition, then, it is lawful - whether dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring or that which a beast has eaten. Any of these slaughtered while sensing signs of life in it shall become lawful.

Under the tenth category, an animal which has been slaughtered at an altar is unlawful. The altar refers to slabs of rocks placed around the Ka'bah which the people of *Jāhiliyyah* took as objects of worship and they would bring animals near the altars and sacrifice them dedicated to these rock slabs. They thought it was worship.

The people of *Jāhiliyyah* used to eat all these kinds of animals, animals which are evil. The Holy Qur'ān declared all of them to be unlawful.

The eleventh practice declared unlawful in this verse is the determining of shares with arrows: *al-istiqsām bi al-azlām*. The Arabic word, '*al-azlām*' used in the Qur'ān is the plural of *zalām*. This was an arrow used to determine shares during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*. They

were seven in number. One would have 'yes' and the other would have 'no' or some similar words written on them. These arrows were kept in the custody of the keeper of the Ka'bah.

When someone wanted his fortune told or wished to find out whether doing something in the future will be beneficial or harmful, they would go to the keeper of the Ka'bah, present money gift to him in anticipation of his service, who would, then, take out these arrows from the quiver one by one. If the arrow so drawn turned out to be the one with the word 'yes' on it, they thought that doing what they wanted to do was beneficial; and if, the arrow drawn had a 'no' on it, they drew the conclusion that they should not do what they wanted to do. The reason why this has been mentioned in the context of unlawful animals is that small groups of pagan Arabs used to have a joint slaughter of a camel or some other animal but, rather than divide up shares from the meat to all participants in accordance with the number of shares originally subscribed to, they would decide it by drawing these arrows. Obviously, by doing that, someone would remain totally deprived, someone else would get too much and there would be someone getting less than what was his right. Therefore, the unlawfulness of this procedure was explained alongwith the unlawfulness of animals.

'Ulamā' say that all methods used to divine future happenings or to find out what is *'Ghayb'* (Unseen) - whether divination through numbers (*'ilm al-Jafr* or Jafar), or palm-reading, or the taking of omen - fall under the injunction of 'determining shares with arrows.'

The Arabic term for 'determining shares with arrows' is sometimes used for *Qimār* or gambling as well wherein rights are determined by the methods of lots or lottery. This too is *Ḥarām* (unlawful) on the authority of the Qur'ān which prohibits it under the name, *'Maisir'* (gambling). Therefore, righteous early elders Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, Mujāhid and Al-Sha'bī said that the way the pagan Arabs used arrows to determine shares, people of Persia and Asia Minor used chessmen and pieces of backgammon for the same purpose. They all fall under the injunction about arrows.

After explaining the unlawfulness of determining shares with arrows al-Tafsīr al-Maẓharī has particularly pointed out that the

Qur'anic statement: ذٰلِكُمْ فِسْقٌ (This is sin) which follows immediately after this injunction means that this method of divination or determining of shares is an act of sin which leads people astray. After that, it was said:

اَلْيَوْمَ يَئِسَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ دِيْنِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ

Today those who disbelieve have lost hopes of (damaging) your faith. So do not fear them, and fear Me.

This verse was revealed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the day of *'Arafah* of the Last Ḥajj in the tenth year of Hijrah. This was a time when the conquest of Makkah and almost of all Arabia was complete. Islamic law prevailed all over the Peninsula. Thereupon, reference was made to the assessment of disbelievers that Muslims were much lower in number as against them and that they were weak too based on which they planned to eliminate them. Now that they do not have those ambitions any more nor do they have the power to pose a challenge, Muslims have been asked to feel secure against them and go on to spend their energy in obeying and worshipping their Lord:

اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ وَاَتْمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِيْ وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْاِسْلَامَ دِيْنًا

Today, I have perfected your religion for you, and have completed My blessing upon you, and chosen Islam as *Din* for you.

The combination of circumstances in which this verse was revealed is special. Imagine. This is the day of *'Arafah,* the foremost day out of the days of the entire year and by chance this *'Arafah* fell on a *Jumu'ah* (Friday) the merits of which are well-known. The place is nothing less than the plain of *'Arafat,* close to the Mount of Mercy (*Jabl ar-Raḥmah*) which, on the day of *'Arafah,* is the chosen spot of the incessant descent of Mercy from Allah Almighty. The time is after *'Aṣr,* which is a blessed time even during normal days, specially so on Friday wherein comes the hour when prayers are answered as confirmed by many authentic reports and this is the time for it. Then, this being the day of *'Arafah* as well, it is all the more likely that prayers shall be answered particularly at this hour and time.

This is the largest and the first great gathering of Muslims for their Ḥajj. Participating in it are some one hundred and fifty thousand noble *Ṣaḥabah*, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them

all. And present with his Companions is the Holy Prophet ﷺ who is the very mercy of all universes sitting on his mount, the she-camel *'Aḍbā'* under the legendary Mount of Mercy busy with his Wuqūf in 'Arafāt, now a great basic rite of Ḥajj.

It is under the canopy of these blissful merits and blessings and mercies that this verse is being revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Spot witnesses to this spectacle, the noble Companions said: When this verse came in the mode of *Waḥy* (revelation) to the Holy Prophet ﷺ what happened was what had transpired earlier too: The weight released by the descending Revelation could be perceived as the she-camel was crouching under that weight, so much so that she was compelled to sit down.

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says that this verse is almost the last verse of the Holy Qur'ān; no verse dealing with *Aḥkām* (Injunctions) was revealed after that. The only exception here is that of some verses of persuasive nature which have been identified as having been revealed after this verse. After the revelation of this verse, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم lived in this mortal world for only eighty one days, for this verse was revealed on the ninth day of Dhil-Ḥijjah in the Hijrah year 10 and it was on the twelfth day of the month of Rabī' al-Awwal in the eleventh year of Hijrah that the Holy Prophet ﷺ departed from this mortal world.

That this verse was revealed in such elegant setting with a very special concern has its secret in the message it conveys which is a great news, a solemn reward and an abiding hallmark of distinction for Islam and Muslims and for the *Ummah* at large. In a nutshell, the message is that the ultimate standard of True Faith and Divine Blessing which was to be bequeathed to human beings in this world has reached its perfection on that great day. This is, so to say, the climax of the divine blessings in the shape of a True Faith which began with Sayyidnā Ādam علیہ السلام and continued in later times when the children of Ādam in every period and every area kept receiving a part of this blessing in proportion to their prevailing conditions. Today, that Faith and that Blessing in its final form has been bestowed upon the Last of the Prophets, the *Rasūl* of Allah صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and to his *Ummah*.

It goes without saying that this bestowal primarily highlights the excellence and distinction of the last and the foremost Prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم among the community of prophets, messengers and apostles. But, it also proves that the *Ummah* has a distinct status among other Traditional Communities.

This is why some Jewish scholars came to Sayyidnā 'Umar and told him: Your Qur'ān has a verse which, if it was revealed to Jews, would have given them an occasion to celebrate its revelation through a festival. Sayyidnā 'Umar asked: Which verse is that? They, in response, recited this very verse (اَلْيَوْمَ اَكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِيْنَكُمْ). Sayyidnā 'Umar said: Yes, we know where and when this verse was revealed. The hint was that the particular day was a day of doubled rejoicing (*Eid*) for Muslims, one for *'Arafah* and the other for *Jumu'ah* (Friday).

The Islamic Principle of Celebrating Festive Occasions

This reply given by Sayyidnā 'Umar also carries a hint towards a cardinal Islamic principle which, of all peoples and religions of the world, is the hallmark of Islam alone. It is common knowledge that peoples from every nation and every religious group commemorate their particular historical events conditioned by their respective self-view. Such days which return each year acquire the status of a major festival with them.

Somewhere the celebration is about the birth or death anniversary of a great person. Elsewhere, it would be a day of coronation, or the day of the conquest of some country or city, or some acclaimed historical event. The net outcome of all such celebrations is no more than increasing the image of particular individuals. Islam is against the cult of personality. It has bypassed the customs of the age of ignorance by eliminating the commemoration of persons and by introducing the commemoration of principles and objectives as standard practice.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, عليه السلام, the patriarch of prophets, was given the title of "Friend of Allah." The Holy Qur'ān paid tributes to him on his success against trials. The verse: وَاِذِ ابْتَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ رَبُّهٗ بِكَلِمٰتٍ فَاَتَمَّهُنَّ (and when his Lord put Ibrāhīm to a test with certain Words! And he fulfilled them) (2:124) means exactly this. But, no anniversary of his birth or death was ever celebrated, nor that of his son, Ismā'īl عليه السلام , nor that of his mother, nor any kind of memorial was established to perpetuate their

memory.

Of course, there were things of significance in their deeds, things related to the objectives of religion and faith. This legacy was worth the best of preservation and commemoration and this legacy was not only preserved but made mandatory for all succeeding generations as an obligatory part of their religion and faith. Sacrifice. Circumcision. Running between the hills of Ṣafā and Marwah. Throwing pebbles at three places in *Minā*. All these are living, ever-reminding monuments to the deeds of the same righteous elders which they performed by sacrificing their personal desires and natural needs aiming for nothing but the pleasure of Allah Almighty. Right there, in these deeds, there is a lesson for all peoples of all times that human beings should sacrifice everything, even the dearest of the dear, for the good pleasure of Allah.

So, this was how Islam abstained from celebrating days devoted to the birth and death of prominent men, or women, no matter how great, or the days highlighting their personal lives and times. Celebrated instead, were days centered around their deeds, specially those pertaining to some particular act of worship, for example, *Laylatul-Barā'ah* (the Night of Deliverance from Sin), Ramaḍān al-Mubārak (the Blessed Month of Ramaḍān), *Laylatul-Qadr* (the Night of Power), *Yowm al-'Arafah* (the Day of *'Arafah)*, Yowm al-'Āshūrā (the Day of 'Āshūrā) etc. As for *'Īd*, the well-known Muslim Festival of Rejoicing, it was limited to only two and that too was made purely religious in nature. The first 'Īd ('Īdul-Fiṭr) was set in between at the end of the month of Ramaḍān al-Mubārak and at the begining of the Ḥajj months while the second 'Īd ('Īdul-Aḍḥā) was appointed to be celebrated after the completion of the Hajj pilgrimage.

To sum up, let us return to the reply given by Sayyidnā 'Umar which so succinctly declared that 'Īds in Islam do not follow historical events as among Jews and Christians. This was the custom of *Jāhiliyyah*, the first age of ignorance when the passing of some major historical event would be turned into a festival. Now, as witnesses to the modern Age of Ignorance, we can see how wide-spread this urge to celebrate has become. The limit is that Muslims themselves have started imitating other nations indulging in practices contrary to their way.

Christians started celebrating a Festival commemorating the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā, عليه السلام. With their example before them, some Muslims introduced another 'Īd, the Festival of the birth of the Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him, and the blessings of Allah. Devoting a day to take out processions on streets with activities neither reasonable nor valid and filling a night with displays of lamps and lights, they took this to be an act of worship. For this there is no basic justification in the words and deeds of the *Ṣaḥābah*, the noble Companions, or the *Tābi'īn*, the Successors to the Companions, or the large body of the righteous elders of the Muslim Community.

The truth of the matter is that this practice of celebrating days would pass with nations which lack individuals with superior merits and achievements. When lucky, they would find a couple or few suitable enough with a record of something special they may have done and commemorating them would become a matter of national pride for them.

If this custom of celebrating days were to be practiced in Islam, we would have to begin with more than one hundred and twenty thousand prophets each of whom has a big roster of wonderful achievements to his credit. Celebrating the birthday of and commemorating the achievements of each would be very much in order. After past prophets, peace be upon them, let us move to the Last of them ﷺ and look at his pure and pristine life. When you do that there would not remain even one day which could turn out to be devoid of one or the other achievement which deserves to be celebrated. From his childhood to his youth, he was an epitome of moral perfections (or a paradigm of virtues, as termed by some modern Muslim writers in the West) whereby he was considered the most trustworthy person in the whole country of 'Arabia. Are these embellishments not worthy enough for Muslims to celebrate? Then, there is the Revelation of the Holy Qur'ān, the event of Hijrah, the Battle of Badr, and Uḥud, and Khandaq, and Ḥunayn, and Tabūk, and the Conquest of Makkah. Add to these all other battles in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم participated. Each deserves a celebration. Similarly, there are thousands of his miracles; each one of them needs commemoration. One needs insight to look at the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which would

bring an honest person to come to the conclusion that his good life - not just a day from it, rather every hour in it - is most worthy of being commemorated, celebrated and rejoiced in.

After the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, think of some one hundred and twenty thousand of his noble Companions each one of whom is really a living miracle of their master. Would it not be unjust to ignore them and avoid celebrating their achievements? If we pursue this practice still further on, we shall be looking at those who followed after the noble Companions - righteous elders, men of Allah, scholars, masters and guides - whose number would shoot up to millions. If commemorative days have to be celebrated, how could one leave them out? Would it not be an injustice to them? Or, a failure to recognize intellectual merit or spiritual excellence? And if, left with not much choice, Muslims were to decide to celebrate memorial days for everyone, they would have a calendar of activities all full of celebrations with no day free - in fact, they would have to celebrate several commemorations, festivals and 'Ids every hour of every day!

No wonder the Prophet of Islam and all his Companions ignored this custom as outmoded pagan practice from the days of *Jāhiliyyah*! Sayyidnā 'Umar, the second *Khalifah* of Islam, may Allah be pleased with him, alludes to this very approach in his policy statement made before the Jews.

Understanding Important Meanings of the Verse

This Verse carries the good news that Allah has given to the noble Prophet and his Community three rewards: Perfection of Faith, Completion of Divine Blessing and the Sharī'ah of Islam as the Chosen Way for the Muslim Community.

1. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, and others with him, explain that Perfection of Faith refers to the perfection of all limits, obligations, injunctions and refinements in personal and social behaviour as necessary for the True Faith. Now there is no need to add to it, nor there remains any probability of a shortfall (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). For this reason, no new injunction from among the total corpus of injunctions was revealed after this. As already pointed out earlier, the few verses which were revealed later on carry either some subjects of persuasion or were a reiteration of injunctions already revealed.

What has been said here is not contrary to the function of the most-authentically qualified jurists of Islam (*Mujtahid* Imāms through which they could explicate and elaborate injunctions of the Sharī'ah related to new and unprecendented events and circumstances as based on their highest possible effort and judgement (*Ijtihād*). The reason is simple - because the Holy Qur'ān which has laid down the limits and obligations of religious injunctions has also, at the same time, determined the principles of *Ijtihād*. Pursuant to this authority, all rules and regulations deduced by *Ijtihād* right through the Last Day will be considered as if they are, in a way, the very injunctions of the Qur'ān itself - because they are subordinate to the principles given by the Qur'ān.

To sum up, we can say that 'Perfection of Faith', as explained by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, is the perfection of all injunctions of the Faith. It needs no addition, while the probability of any shortfall through abrogation just does not exist - because, soon after, the ongoing process of *Waḥy* (revelation) was to be discontinued following the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from this mortal world; and no injunction of the Holy Qur'ān can be abrogated without a Divine revelation (*Waḥy*). As for the apparent multiplicity of sub-injunctions that generated from jurists under the principle of *Ijtihād* was, in reality, no multiplicity as such. It was, rather, the explication and elaboration of the Qur'ānic injunctions.

2. 'Completion of Blessing' means the rise of Muslims and the fall of their antagonists - which was manifested through the Conquest of Makkah, the eradication of the customs of *Jāhiliyyah* and through the absence of all disbelievers from the Ḥajj that year.

The words of the Qur'ān used here show that '*Ikmāl*' (perfection) has been coupled with '*Dīn*' (Faith) while the word '*Itmām*' (Completion) goes with '*Ni'mah*' (blessing) - though both words are obviously synonymous and are generally used interchangeably. But, in fact, there is a difference in the sense they both carry. This has been explained by Imām Rāghib al-Isfahānī in his Mufradāt al-Qur'ān by saying that the '*Ikmāl* and *Takmīl*' (Perfection) of something means that the purpose and objective behind it has been accomplished (perfection of something carries exactly the same sense in English,

specially at a time when spoken of, as *'al-yowm'* (today) in the verse already indicates). The other word, *'Itmām'* (Completion) means that nothing else is needed any more. Thus, 'Perfection of Faith' tells us that the purpose of sending Divine Law and the injunctions of Faith into this world stands fulfilled and perfected today; and 'Completion of Blessing' means that Muslims do not have to depend on anyone anymore. Allah has Himself given them supremacy, power, authority. They can use these to promulgate and implement the imperatives (*Aḥkām*, Injunctions) of this True Faith.

Also noteworthy here is the arrangement in the Verse where *'Dīn'* (Faith) has been attributed to Muslims while the attribution of *'Ni'mah'* (Blessing) is towards Almighty Allah. This is because *'Dīn'* (Faith) is demonstrated by what the members of the Community do while the consummation of *'Ni'mah'* (Blessing) is directly from Almighty Allah (Ibn al-Qayyim, Tafsīr).

The meanings as established here also clarify that the Perfection of Faith 'today' does not mean that, earlier, the Faith of the blessed prophets was imperfect. Quite contrary to that, the *'Dīn'* (Faith) of every prophet and messenger was perfect and complete in terms of the relevant period of time (Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ with reference to al-Qaffāl al-Marwazī). In other words, it means that the period in which a Law or Faith was sent by Allah to a prophet, it was in itself perfect and complete for that period and for the people who belonged to it. But, the future projection, that the Faith quite perfect for that period and its people will not remain perfect for later periods and peoples, was already there in the ultimate Knowledge of Almighty Allah - He knew that it would be abrogated and another Faith and Law will take its place. This is contrary to the case of the Sharī'ah of Islam which was sent last of all since it is perfect from all sides and angles. It is neither specified for any particular time nor is it restricted to any particular area, country or people. Instead of all that, Islam is a Sharī'ah which is perfect and complete for every period and every area and every people for all times to come right upto the Last Day.

3. The third reward which has been bestowed upon the Muslim Community through this Verse is that Allah has, by His creational prerogative, authority and wisdom, chosen the Faith of Islam for this

Ummah which is perfect and complete in all its aspects - and on which depends the ultimate Salvation.

Certainly great was the message this Verse gave to the Muslim Community which was thus blessed with the finest gift they could ever dream of: the gift of the *Dīn* of Islam - the last and the most perfect Faith, after which there is no Faith to come and in which there shall be no addition or deletion. When this Verse was revealed, Muslims had good reason to be jubilant about Allah's mercy which descended upon them in that manner. But, Sayyidnā 'Umar was found in tears. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him the reason for his tears. He replied: This Verse seems to indicate that now your stay in this world is very short, because with the perfection of Islam, the need of a *Rasūl* to be present also stands fulfilled! The Holy Prophet ﷺ agreed with him (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr and al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ). Time showed that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم departed from this mortal world only after eighty one days this event took place.

Unlawfulness of Animals: Exception under Compulsion

Towards the end of the Verse, the statement: فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ فِي مَخْمَصَةٍ (But, whoever is compelled by severe hunger with no way out) relates to animals the unlawfulness of which has been mentioned in the earlier part of the Verse. The purpose of the sentence is to exclude a particular condition from the general rule. If a person is subjected to severe hunger to a point where death becomes likely, then, under this condition, were he to eat a little from unlawful animals mentioned in the Verse, there will be no sin on him. But, the condition is that the purpose of such eating should not be to have one's fill or to enjoy it. Instead of doing that, one should eat just about what would remove the state of compulsion.

This is exactly what the words: غَيْرَ مُتَجَانِفٍ لِّإِثْمٍ (having no inclination to sin) following immediately mean, that is, this act should be free from any inclination to commit a sin. Contrary to that, the purpose should only be limited to get relief from the excruciating state of compulsion. Towards the end of the Verse, the statement: فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful) makes a pointed reference to the fact that these unlawful things are still unlawful as they already were, but only such a person has been given leave because of the state of compulsion he may be in.

Verse 4

يَسْئَلُوْنَكَ مَاذَآ اُحِلَّ لَهُمْ ط قُلْ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ لا وَمَا عَلَّمْتُمْ
مِّنَ الْجَوَارِحِ مُكَلِّبِيْنَ تُعَلِّمُوْنَهُنَّ مِمَّا عَلَّمَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ز فَكُلُوْا مِمَّآ
اَمْسَكْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ ص وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ط اِنَّ
اللّٰهَ سَرِيْعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٤﴾

They ask you as to what has been made lawful for them. Say, "Made lawful for you are good things, and (hunting through) birds and beasts of prey that you train teaching them out of what Allah has taught you. So, eat of what they hold for you, and recite the name of Allah upon it." And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is swift at reckoning. [4]

Lawful and unlawful animals were mentioned in preceding verses. An answer to a question on the same subject appears in the present verse. Some Companions had asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ about the rule governing hunting with the help of a trained dog and falcon. Given in this verse is an answer to that question.

Commentary

To make an animal lawful when hunted through a dog or falcon, four conditions have been mentioned in the question and its answer appearing above. These are:

1. The dog or falcon should be taught, trained and disciplined. The functional principle given here is that the dog should have been groomed in a manner that it should, when released at the prey, catch it and bring it back to you - not that it starts eating it. As for a falcon, the rule set was that it should immediately return when called by you, even if it was chasing the prey. When so trained, it will prove that these beasts of prey hunt for you and not for themselves. Now the animal hunted by these beasts of prey will be considered your own. And if they act against this training once in a while, for example, the dog itself starts eating the prey, or the falcon does not return at your call, then, this game is not yours anymore, therefore, eating it is not permissible.

2. The second condition is that you should release the dog or falcon immediately at your choice and will, not that they dash after some game and hunt it on their own. In the verse under discussion, this condition has been made to come out clearly by the use of the word, "*Mukallibin*." Lexically, this word is a derivation from '*Taklib*' which basically means the training of dogs. Later, it also came to be used in the sense of training beasts of prey and releasing them after the game. The author of the famous Tafsir Jalalayn explains it in the sense of '*Irsal*' (send after) which means releasing after the game. This view has been reported in Tafsir al-Qurtubi as well.

3. The third condition is that the beasts of prey do not themselves start eating the game - instead, they should bring it to you. This condition has been explained through : مِمَّآ اَمۡسَكۡنَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ (what they hold for you).

4. The fourth condition is: When you release the dog or the falcon after the game, do it after saying '*Bismillah*' (With the name of Allah).

When these conditions stand fulfilled, the game - if dead before it reaches you - will still be lawful with no need to slaughter. If otherwise, it will not be lawful for you unless slaughtered.

With Imam Abu Hanifah, there is a fifth condition as well: That this beast of prey should have also wounded the game. A hint towards this condition is embedded in the word, "*Al-Jawarih*" (birds and beasts of prey) which also means animals which wound or injure.

Ruling: This injunction covers wild animals out of one's possession and control. In case a wild animal has been captured, it will not become lawful without having been properly slaughtered.

Finally, at the end of the verse, there comes the instruction that hunting through a beast of prey has no doubt been made lawful by Almighty Allah, but, it is not permissible to ignore *Salah* and other necessary religious obligations for the sake of having fun chasing game.

Verse 5

اَلۡيَوۡمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ ؕ وَطَعَامُ الَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ
لَّكُمۡ ۖ وَطَعَامُكُمۡ حِلٌّ لَّهُمۡ ۚ وَالۡمُحۡصَنٰتُ مِنَ الۡمُؤۡمِنٰتِ وَالۡمُحۡصَنٰتُ

مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِيْٓ اَخْدَانٍ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِالْاِيْمَانِ فَقَدْ حَبِطَ عَمَلُهٗ ۡ وَهُوَ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾

This day, good things have been made lawful for you. And the food of the people of the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them, and good women from among believers, and good women from among those given the Book before you, provided you give them their dowers, binding yourself in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours. And whoever rejects Faith, his effort will go waste and, in the Hereafter, he is among the losers. [5]

Commentary

In the first verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the lawfulness of domestic animals such as the goat, cow and buffalo has been described. The third verse has a detail of nine kinds of unlawful animals. From that detail to the opening sentence of the present verse, we come to know in summation the essentials of the lawfulness and unlawfulness of animals as well as its operating standard and rule.

The verse opens with the words: اَلْيَوْمَ اُحِلَّ لَكُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتُ (This day, good things have been made lawful for you). Here, 'this day' means the day on which this verse and those before it have been revealed, that is, the Day of *'Arafah* in the Last Ḥajj of Hijrah 10. The sense is that the way your Faith has been made perfect and the blessing of Allah stands completed for you on this day, very similarly, good things from Allah which were already lawful for you have been allowed to stay lawful for ever. The probability that the injunction could be withdrawn does not exist anymore because the ongoing process of revelation was to be discontinued.

This sentence mentions the lawfulness of good things. But, another verse (7:157): يُحِلُّ لَهُمُ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ (Made lawful for them are good things and made unlawful for them are evil things). Here, by placing *'At-Ṭayyibāt'* (good things) against *'Al-Khabā'ith'* (impure things), the reality of both words has been made clear. Lexically,

things good, pure, clean and delightful are called '*Aṭ-Ṭayyibāt*'; and in contrast, '*Al-Khabāith*' is used to denote things which are evil and disgusting. Therefore, this sentence of the verse stresses that everything good, pure and beneficial has been made lawful for human beings and everything disgusting and harmful has been made unlawful. The reason is that human beings are not like animals whose purpose of life is limited to eating, drinking, sleeping, waking - being no more than a sort of live-die cycle. Nature has made them the master of the universe for some special purpose and that cannot be achieved without having high and pure morals. Therefore, immoral human beings would really not deserve to be counted as human beings.

That is why the Holy Qur'ān has said about such people: بَلْ هُمْ اَضَلُّ, that is, they are like cattle, rather more astray. Now if we accept that the 'humanity' of human beings depends on the betterment of their morals, it will become necessary to concede that they must be made to totally abstain from everything which leads to the corruption of human morals. Everyone knows how environment and society affect human morals. When things outside can do that to human morals, just imagine what would be the effect of things which go inside the human body for what becomes a part of the human body must affect its ethical behaviour. Therefore, caution must necessarily be observed in all foods and drinks. And let us keep in mind that unlawful income from theft, robbery, bribery, interest, gambling and evils like that, once it becomes part of anyone's body, will inevitably remove one farther from humanity and nearer to 'satanic nature.'

Hence, says the Holy Qur'ān: يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوْا مِنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ وَاعْمَلُوْا صَالِحًا (O' Messengers, eat from good things [made lawful as sustenance] and do righteous deeds - 23:51). Here, the command to be righteous in deeds refers itself back to the command to eat from what is *Ḥalāl* (lawful) because without eating *Ḥalāl*, righteous deeds cannot be imagined. This consideration is very important specially in the case of meat which becomes an integral part of the human body. One has to be most cautious and guard against the possibility of non-*Ḥalāl* meat entering his system through food and go on to spoil his morals. Similar is the case of meat which is physically harmful for human beings as the carrier of bacteria causing disease and death. Everyone knows that abstention

from such meat is necessary. As for things declared evil by the Sharī'ah of Islam, these are definitely agents of corruption for the human body or the soul or both. Since they are dangerous for human life and morals, they were made unlawful. As opposed to this, good things, the '*Ṭayyibāt*' contribute to the nurture and flowering of the human body, soul and morals - so, they were made lawful. In this way, this brief sentence of the Qur'ān has given to us the philosophy and ground rules of the lawful and the unlawful, so to say, in a nutshell.

Now, as to which things are pure, beneficial and desirable and which others are impure, harmful and disgusting, the real decision of the matter lies with the desire and aversion of one's inherent good taste. This is the reason why animals declared unlawful by Islam have been considered impure and disgusting by people of good taste during every period of time - for instance, carrion and blood. Nevertheless, there come occasions when custom-based ignorance overpowers good taste and when the fine line between good and bad fades out. Or, the evil in some things is concealed. In such situations, the decision of the prophets, peace be on all of them, is the guiding and binding authority for everyone. The reason is that the noble prophets are the foremost in commonsense, decency, goodness and taste among human beings. They were specially gifted by Almighty Allah with an instrinsically sound and balanced nature and He Himself took the responsibility of their nurture and grooming. One might say that they rose to be what they were under a Divine security shield manned by angels which saw to it that their minds and hearts and morals would never be affected by any evil environment. So, things they took as evil are really evil; and what they found to be good is really good.

In Ḥujjatullah al-Bālighah, Shah Walīyyullāh says that all animals declared unlawful by the Sharī'ah of Islam, when observed closely, will all fit compactly under two principles: one - an animal is evil by its nature and disposition; two - the method of slaughtering the animal is wrong, as a result of which it will be considered 'dead' ('*Maitah*' - carrion), not slaughtered.

In the third verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, things called unlawful are nine in number. Out of these, the 'swine' is part of the first kind; the rest of the eight are in the second. By saying: وَيُحَرِّمُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْخَبٰٓئِثَ (He allows

them as lawful what is good [and pure] and prohibits them from what is bad [and impure] - 7:157 - AYA, rev. ed., Madinah) the Holy Qur'ān declares the general rule that all evil animals are unlawful. For details, the Holy Qur'ān points out to some clearly, for instance, ' the flesh of swine' and 'flowing blood'... The enumeration of the rest was entrusted to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. One sign of an animal being evil he gave was that a people could have been punished by having been transformed (*Maskh*) into the form of an animal. This indicates that the particular animal is evil by its very nature as Divine wrath transformed it into an animal. For example, says the Holy Qur'ān: وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيرَ which means that some peoples have been transformed into swines and monkeys as punishment. This proves that both these kinds of animals are evil by nature - they, even if slaughtered, would still not become lawful. Then there are animals whose very doings and likings are sufficient for people of natural disposition to sense the evil inside them. For instance, there are beasts who live by injuring, tearing and eating other animals - a hard-hearted lifestyle indeed.

Therefore, when someone asked about a wolf from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, he said: "Can a human being eat it?" Similarly, there are many animals among crawlers and fliers whose very nature is to hurt or snatch away things, for instance, the snake, scorpion, house-lizard, fly, or a kite and falcon and others like them. So, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم set the rule that animals among beasts which tear animals apart with teeth, such as the lion and the wolf and others of their kind, and animals among birds such as the falcon and the hawk and others of their kind which hunt with their claws, are all unlawful; or, animals which are by nature mean and low or get themselves befouled with impurities, such as the rat or animals which eat carrion, or the donkey and similar others, all fall under the category of animals the physical properties and harmfulness of which is readily sensed by any human being with a normal mind and temperament.

To recapitulate, we can say that the animals which have been made unlawful under the Sharī'ah of Islam are of two kinds: Those intrinsically evil and those which are not evil by themselves but they have not been slaughtered following the method of slaughtering animals ordained by Almighty Allah. This includes all other options such

as the animal was not slaughtered at all - but was killed by shock or blow - or the act of slaughtering did take place, but rather than pronounce the name of Allah on it, a name other than that of Allah was recited, or just no name was pronounced by knowingly omitting the name of Allah at the time of slaughter. Such *Dhibḥ* or slaughter is equally untrustworthy and invalid in view of the Sharī'ah. In fact, this is very much like having 'killed' an animal without proper slaughter.

Something worth attention here is that everything one eats and drinks comes to him as a blessing from Allah, but, excepting the animals, no restriction has been imposed on cooking or eating anything from them other than that which would make it necessary for you to say '*Allāhu-Akbar*' or '*Bismillāh'* invariably before cooking and eating, as if, that food would not be lawful without it. At the most, the saying of '*Bismillāh'* at the time of eating and drinking anything has been classified as desirable or recommended ('*Mustaḥabb'* : acts the neglect of which is not punished by Allah, but the performance of which is rewarded). Contrary to this is the matter of animals, for it has been made necessary ('*Wājib'*) that the name of Allah be invoked while slaughtering them - and if, anyone were to leave out the name of Allah at the time of the slaughter, the animal was declared to be carrion, and unlawful: What is the wisdom behind it?

A little deliberation makes it clear that the lives of all living beings are equal in a way. Therefore, the act of one life form whereby another life form is slaughtered and exterminated should, obviously, be not permissible. Now, for those it has been made permissible, it is a major reward from Allah. That is why the realization of the presence of this Divine blessing and the expression of gratitude for it has been made necessary at the time of slaughtering the animal. This is contrary to the case of things like grains and fruits - their very growth is for the sole purpose that human beings use them up to fulfill their needs. Therefore, the saying of '*Bismillāh'* only whenever used has been placed at the level of being desirable ('*Mustaḥabb*') - it has not been made necessary ('*Wājib*': a duty which, if not done, brings punishment).

There is yet another reason. There was a lingering custom from the days of *Jāhiliyyah* that disbelievers used to pronounce the names

of their idols while slaughtering animals. The Sharī'ah of Islam transformed this un-Islamic custom into a wonderful act of worship by making it necessary to invoke the name of Allah instead. This was functionally the most appropriate strategy that some correct name instead of the false one be proposed, otherwise it would have been difficult to wean people away from ongoing customs and habits.

The slaughter of the people of the Book

The second sentence of the Verse is: وَطَعَامُ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ حِلٌّ لَّكُمْ وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ (and the food of the people of the Book is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them ...). According to the consensus of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tabi'īn* (the Companions and their Successors), the word '*Ṭa'ām*' (food) at this place means 'properly slaughtered animals' (*Dhabīḥah*). This is what has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, Abū ad-Dardā', Ibrāhīm, Qatādah, al-Suddī, Ḍhaḥḥāk and Mujāhid, may Allah be pleased with them all (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and al-Jaṣṣāṣ) - because, in foods of all other kinds, the people of the Book and the idolators and all other disbelievers are just the same as bread, flour, lintels, beans, rice, fruits and similar other eatables need no slaughtering. For Muslims, eating that kind of food, of course, when procured by any lawful means, is permissible - and conversely, when they procure it from Muslims, it is lawful for them. Thus, the essence of the sentence is that the *Dhabīḥah* (properly slaughtered animal) of the People of the Book is lawful for Muslims and the *Dhabīḥah* (properly slaughtered animal) of Muslims is lawful for the People of the Book.

At this point, there are some issues which should be considered. First of all, who are the People of the Book in the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah? What does 'Book' mean? And, is it also necessary that, in order to be regarded as the People of the Book, these people believe in and act according to their Book, correctly and faithfully? Here, it is obvious that the Book cannot be taken in its literal sense, that is, any written page. It can only mean a particular Book which has come from Allah. Therefore, there is a consensus of Muslim *Ummah* that 'Book' could only mean a particular Scripture about which there exists a certitude that, confirmed by the Holy Qur'an, it is the Book of Allah, for instance, the Torah, Evangile, Zabūr (Psalms) and other scriptures of of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Ibrāhīm. Therefore, peoples

and nations which believe in some book and claim for it the status of a Divine Revelation - and which does not stand proved through the certain sources of the Qur'ān and Sunnah - shall not be included under the term of the People of the Book, for example, the disbelievers of Makkah, the Magians or the Zoroastrians, the idol-worshipping Hindus, the Buddhists, Aryans, Sikhs and many others.

This tells us that the Jews and Christians who are believers of the Torah and the Evangile are included within the Qur'ānic terminology of The People of the Book. The Sābians, a third people, cannot be identified precisely. Those who think that they believed in the Psalms of David (Zabūr) are inclined towards including them too among The People of the Book. Those who were convinced that they had nothing to do with the Psalms, take them to be star-worshippers. They group them together with the idolators and Magians. However, the Jews and Christians are the ones who are called The People of the Book by universal agreement. Now, we can return to the gist of the Qur'ānic injunction, that is, the *Dhabīḥah* (slaughter) of Jews and Christians is *Ḥalāl* for Muslims and the *Dhabīḥah* of Muslims is *Ḥalāl* for them.

As for the need to first determine the basis of calling and understanding the Jews and Christians as the People of the Book, one may ask: Is it bound with the condition that they should genuinely believe in the original Torah and Evangile and act in accordance with these? Or, even those who follow the altered Torah and Evangile and those who ascribe to Sayyidnā 'Īsā and Sayyidah Maryam, may Allah bless them both, partnership in the Divinity of God, shall be deemed as included among the People of the Book? The answer is that it is quite evident from the many clarifications of the Qur'ān that for a people to be from 'The People of the Book', it is quite enough that they accept and believe in a Scripture and claim to follow it - irrespective of how much astray they may have gone while following it.

Those to whom the Holy Qur'ān gave the title of The People of the Book were also those about whom it said at several places that these people distort their Scriptures: يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ (5:13). It also said that the Jews took Sayyidnā 'Uzayr عليه السلام as the son of God and the Christians did the same to Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام: وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ۨابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ (9:30). When, despite what they were and what they

did, the Holy Qur'ān insisted on calling them The People of the Book, it becomes evident that - unless the Jews and Christians were to abandon Judaism and Christianity totally - they shall continue to be the People of the Book, no matter how involved in false beliefs of their religion and dark doings they may be.

Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ reports in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān that during the *Khilāfah* of Sayyidnā 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, one of his governors wrote to him for advice. He said that there were some people in his area who recited the Torah and observed the Sabbath like the Jews but they did not believe in *Qiyāmah* (the Last Day). He wanted to know how he was supposed to deal with such people. Sayyidnā 'Umar wrote back telling him that they will be taken as a sect of The People of the Book after all.

Atheist Jews and Christians are not the People of the Book:

These days a very large number of people in Europe (and elsewhere) who are listed in the Census records as Jews and Christians do not really believe in the existence of God and, for that matter, do not subscribe to any institutionalized religion. They do not accept the Torah and Evangile as Scriptures, nor do they have faith in Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā (Moses and Jesus), may peace be upon them, as prophets or messengers of Allah. It is obvious that such people cannot be counted as included under the injunction governing the People of the Book simply because their names are listed as Jews and Christians in the Census records.

When Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ said that the slaughter of some Christians of Arabia is not *Ḥalal*, he gave a reason. He said that those people believe in nothing but drinking. His words as reported by Ibn al-Jauzī are being cited below:

روی ابن الجوزی بسنده عن علی رضی الله عنه قال لاتأکلوا من ذبائح
نصاری بنی تغلب فانهم لم يتمسكوا من النصرانية بشیٔ الاشربهم الخمر
ورواه الشافعی بسند صحيح عنه (تفسیر مظهری ص ۳٤، ج ۳ مائده)

'Do not eat from the animals slaughtered by the Christians belonging to Banī Taghlib for they have taken nothing from the Christian faith except the drinking of wine (narrated by Al-Shafi'ī with sound authority - al-Tafsīr al-Mazharī, p. 34, v. 3, al-Mā'idah)

Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ prohibited the slaughter of the Christians of Banī Taghlib because, according to his information, they were libertines, not Christians. However, the majority of *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tabi'īn* found out that these people too were like common Christians and had never rejected their Faith. Therefore, they ruled that the slaughter of these people was also lawful. Al-Qurṭubī says in his commentary:

> The majority of the Muslim jurists are of the opinion that the Dhabīḥa of Christians is lawful, whether from Banī Taghlib or from some other tribe or group. Similarly, the Dhabīḥa of every Jew is also lawful. (Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī)

In short, Christians about whom there is confirmed and certain information that they do not believe in the very existence of God or do not accept Sayyidnā Mūsā and 'Īsā علیہما السلام as prophets, will not be included under the injunction governing the People of the Book.

What does the 'food' of the People of the Book mean?

Literally, '*Ṭa'ām*' means what is eaten which, in the Arabic lexicon, includes all kinds of eatables. But, the majority of the scholars of the Muslim *Ummah* hold that *Ṭa'ām*' at this particular place refers to the meat of the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book because there is no distinction between the People of the Book and other disbelievers in eatables other than meat. Dry eatables like wheat, chick peas, rice and fruit are open commodities and are lawful when received from a disbeliever of any shade. Nobody differs about that. As for food which goes through human handling, the cautious practice is to avoid it since the purity (*Ṭahārah*) of utensils and hands used by the disbelievers is not reliable. It is better not to use it without the urgency of need. But, this is a situation in which the probability of impurity is the same among idolators and the People of the Book.

To sum up, it can be said that the only possible legal difference in the 'food' of the People of the Book and other disbelievers is in the meat they slaughter. Therefore, in the present verse, it is a consensus of the *Ummah* that the 'food of the People of the Book' means their properly slaughtered animal. In his famous Tafsīr, al-Qurṭubī writes:

والطعام اسم لمايؤكل والذبائح منه وهو ههنا خاص بالذبائح عند كثير من
اهل العلم بالتأويل واما ماحرم من طعامهم فليس بداخل فى عموم

الخطاب . (قرطبى ٧٧، ج ٦)

The word, 'Ta'ām' is used for whatever is eaten, included within which are slaughtered animals as well - and here it has been used for slaughtered animals particularly. According to the view of the majority of exegetes of the Qur'ān, whatever is unlawful from the 'food' of the People of the Book is not included in this generality of address (Qurṭubī p. 77, v. 6).

Later, al-Qurṭubī gives a detailed comment as follows:

لا خلاف بين العلماء ان مالايحتاج الى ذبح كالطعام الذى لامحاولة فيه كالفاكهة والبر. جائزا كله اذ لايضر فيه تملك احد والطعام الذى تقع فيه المحاولة على ضربين احدهما مافيه محاولة صنعة لاتعلق لها بالدين كخبزة الدقيق وعصره الزيت ونحوه . فهذا ان تجنب من الذمى فعلى وجه التقذر . والضرب الثانى التذكية الّتى ذكرنا انها هى اللتى تحتاج الى الدين والنية. فلما كان القياس ان لاتجوز ذبائحهم كما نقول انّهم لاصلاة لهم ولا عبادة مقبولة له رخص الله تعالى فى ذبائحهم على هذه الأمة واخرجها النص عن القياس على ماذكرنا من قول ابن عباس . (قرطبى سورة مائدة ص ٧٧، ج ٦)

There is no difference of view among scholars that it is lawful to eat what requires no slaughter such as fruit and wheat for its being owned (by a non-Muslim) does not bring any damage to the eatable. However, 'food' which requires effort has two kinds: First of these is the one in which one makes or produces something which has nothing to do with religion, such as, making bread from dough or pressing oil from olives - in this case, if a Muslim were to abstain from the outcome of the effort of a disbelieving citizen of an Islamic state (*Dhimmī*), that would be an abstention simply based on temperamental distaste. The second kind needs the purifying process of slaughtering an animal properly which, in turn, requires Faith and Intention. In that case, the normal assumption would have required that the act of slaughter performed by a disbeliever should have not been acceptable very much like his acts of worship and prayer. But, Allah Almighty made their slaughtered animals specially lawful for the Muslim Community. This situation has been excepted by the express provision of

the Holy Qur'ān from the general rule, as mentioned by Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. (Qurṭubī - Sūrah al-Mā'idah, p. 77, v. 6)

The gist is that the 'food' of the People of the Book as it appears in this verse means - with the agreement of scholars of *Tafsīr* - food the lawfulness of which depends upon religion and belief: that is, the *Dhabīḥah* (the slaughter). Therefore, special treatment was meted out to the People of the Book in the case of this form of 'food' - because they too claim to believe in Books and Prophets sent by Allah, though their textual alterations invalidated their claim with the result that they got involved in disbelief and in ascribing partners to Allah. This was contrary to the position of disbelieving idolators who did not even claim to believe in any Scripture or Prophet or Messenger and the books or persons they believe in are neither books sent by Allah nor prophets or messengers as proved by any Word of Allah.

The Wisdom behind the Lawfulness of the slaughter of the People of the Book

The third question about the present verse is why the slaughter of the Jews and the Christians, as well as marrying their women, is made lawful for the Muslims, while all other non-Muslims have no such privilege. According to most of the Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and other exegetes of the Holy Qur'ān, the answer to this question is very simple. Although the Jews and Christians had distorted their original religion by making many alterations therein, yet their faith regarding these two aspects matched with the Islamic injunctions. That is, they consider it necessary to invoke the name of Allah on their slaughter as an article of faith and take an animal to be impure and unlawful as carrion without that due process.

Similar is the case in marriage - the list of the women of prohibited degree (marriage with whom is not lawful) is the same in their religion as in Islam. Also, the way it is necessary in Islam that marriage be pronounced openly, and in the presence of two witnesses, so it is with them - even in their present religion, the same injunctions continue.

The great commentator, Ibn Kathīr has reported this very position taken by most *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tabi'īn*. His words are as follows:

(وطعام اهل الكتاب) قال ابن عباس وابو امامة ومجاهد وسعيد بن جبير

وعكرمه وعطاء والحسن ومكحول وابرهيم النخعي والسدى ومقاتل بن
حيان يعنى ذبائحهم حلال للمسلمين لانهم يعتقدون تحريم الذبح لغير الله
ولا يذكرون على ذبائحهم الا اسم الله وان اعتقدوافيه تعالى ماهو منزه
عنه تعالى وتقدس . (ابن كثير مائدة ص ١٩، ج ٣)

Ibn 'Abbās, Abū Umāmah, Mujāhid, Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, 'Ikrimah, 'Atā', Ḥasan, Makhḥūl, Ibrāhīm al-Nakh'ii, Suddī and Muqātil ibn Ḥayyān have explained 'the food of the People of the Book' as their 'Dhabā'iḥ' (properly slaughtered animals). These are lawful for Muslims because they consider slaughtering animals for anyone other than Allah as unlawful and do not invoke any name other than that of Allah on animals they slaughter - even if they believe in things about Almighty Allah from which the great Creator is free and far above (Ibn Kathīr, Sūrah al-Mā'idah, p. 19, v. 3).

This statement of Ibn Kathīr tells us two things: One, that all Companions and their Successors mentioned above take the 'food of the People of the Book' to mean their properly slaughtered animals (*Dhabā'iḥ*) and that there is a consensus of the *Ummah* that they are lawful. And the second point made clear here is that the reason why the *Dḥabā'ih* of the People of the Book are lawful in the view of these revered authorities is that the issue of *Dhabīḥah* with the Jews and Christians still stays valid in accordance with the Sharī'ah of Islam despite the many alterations in their religion - as they too take an animal slaughtered in the name of someone other than Allah as unlawful and that they deem it necessary to invoke the name of Allah upon the animal being slaughtered. However, it is a different matter that they fell into the polytheistic belief in Trinity whereby they started equating Allah and Masīḥ son of Maryam as one and the same. The Holy Qur'ān alludes to this in the following words:

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ

Certainly, gone infidel are those who say, "God is the Masīḥ son of Maryam (Jesus son of Mary).

The outcome is that all verses of the Qur'ān concerning *Dhabīhaḥ* - which appear in Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-An'ām, and in which the animal slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah, as well as

the animal upon which the name of Allah was not invoked - declare both being equally unlawful. All these verses have permanent legal effect and must be acted upon for all times to come. The verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah which declares the food of the People of the Book as lawful is also no different from the injunctions appearing in these verses because the very reason of making the food of the People of the Book lawful is no other than that their present religion also maintains that an animal slaughtered by invoking the name of someone other than Allah upon it, and the animal upon which the name of Allah was not invoked, are both unlawful. Even today, the current copies of the Torah and the Evangile do have injunctions of slaughter and marriage almost similar to those of the Qur'ān and Islam, details of which will appear a little later.

However, the possibility is there that some ignorant people act in a manner which goes against this injunction of their own religion - very similar to many ignorance-based customs which have found currency among uninformed sections of Muslim masses as well: but, these cannot be called the religion of Islam. Noticing this behaviour of the ignorant masses among the Christians of that time, the revered Tabi'īn (the successors to the Companions) took the position that Allah, when He made the food of the People of the Book lawful, already knew what they did with their slaughtering of animals. Some would invoke the name of Masīḥ or 'Uzayr upon it while others would invoke no name at all. So, we see that the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, which declares the 'food' of the People of the Book as lawful, acts as a particularizer or a sort of abrogator of the verses of the Sūrahs al-Baqarah and al-An'ām on the subject of the slaughter of animals, verses in which the slaughtering of animals in a name other than that of Allah or slaughtering them without invoking the name of Allah has been declared unlawful.

According to the view of great 'Ulamā', the respected Tābi'īn, who declared that an un-named slaughter of an animal, or of one upon whom a name other than that of Allah was invoked were lawful, also knew that the original religion of the People of the Book was not different from what Islam enjoined and it was only the ignorant section of their masses which made such errors. Despite this, these revered elders did not exclude the ignorant masses of the People of the Book

from the general rule governing the People of the Book. They upheld, in matters relating to the slaughter of animals and to marriage, the same injunction which governed their forefathers and the followers of the original religion, that is, the slaughter of animals by them and the marriage with their women was permissible.

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Ibn al-'Arabī says that he asked his teacher, Abū al-Fatḥ al-Maqdisī about the Christians of his time who slaughtered an animal invoking a name other than that of Allah upon it - for example, they invoked the name of Masīḥ or 'Uzayr at the time of slaughter - how could their *Dhabīḥah* become lawful, he wondered. The reply given by Al-Maqdisī was:

هم من ابائهم وقد جعلهم الله تعالى تبعالمن كان قبلهم مع علمه بحالهم

(احكام ابن العربى ص ۲۲۹، جلد اول)

> The injunction that governs them is like that of their forefathers. This condition (of the People of the Book) was already within the knowledge of Almighty Allah, but, He has made them subordinate to their forefathers. (Aḥkām, Ibn al-'Arabi, p. 229, v. 1)

In recapitulation, it can be said that in the sight of the learned elders of the Muslim Community who have permitted the consumption of animals slaughtered by the People of the Book - those upon which the name of Allah was not invoked, rather, invoked thereupon was a name other than that of Allah - it was clear that these things are an integral part of the real faith of the People of the Book and are equally unlawful there. But, these learned elders allowed the erring masses also to be governed by the injunction which applies to the original People of the Book. It was for this reason that they allowed the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book to be taken as lawful. On the other side, the majority of the Ṣaḥābah, Tabi'īn and *Mujtahid* Imāms noticed that the animals slaughtered by the misled masses among the People of the Book, whether in a name other than that of Allah or without the name of Allah, were after all against the Islamic injunction but, in addition to that, the practice was against the current faith of the Christians themselves. Therefore, what they do should not affect the standing injunctions. So, they gave the verdict that the animals slaughtered by such people are not included under 'the food of the People of the

Book' and, as such, there is no reason to support its lawfulness. Also, the act of going by the saying that their own wrong doing had caused particularization or abrogation in the verses of the Qur'ān is not correct in any manner whatsoever.

Therefore, all leading authorities in Tafsīr - Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Kathīr, Abū Ḥayyān and others - are unanimous in holding that there was no abrogation (*Naskh*) in the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-An'ām. This is also the favoured position of the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tabi'īn as cited earlier with reference to Ibn Kathīr and as mentioned in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ in the following words:

وذهب الى ان الكتابى اذا لم يذكر الله على الذبيحة وذكر غير الله لم توكل وبه قال ابو الدرداء وعبادة بن الصامت وجماعة من الصحابة وبه قال ابو حنيفة وابو يوسف ومحمد وزفر و مالك وكره النخعى والثورى اكل ماذبح واهل به لغير الله (البحر المحيط ص ٤٣١، ج ٤)

And they believe: If a *Kitābī* (of the People of the Book) were to omit the name of Allah while slaughtering an animal, or were to invoke upon it a name other than that of Allah, it is not permissible to eat it. And this is the saying of Abū ad-Dardā', 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit and a group of the Ṣaḥābah. And this is also the belief of Abū Ḥanīfah, Abū Yūsuf, Muḥammad, Ẓafar and Mālik. However, An-Nakh'ii and Ath-Thawrī rule the eating of it as *Makrūh* (reprehensible). (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, p. 431,v.5)

The drive of comments made this far is to establish that the Ṣaḥābah, the Tabi'īn and the pious elders of the *Ummah* had no difference of opinion among them about the understanding that during the period of the revelation of the Qur'ān the original faith of the People of the Book also ruled that an animal, upon which a name other than that of Allah was invoked, or was omitted deliberately, was unlawful. The same was the case with the lawfulness and unlawfulness of marriage - the original code of the People of the Book right upto the present times is in accord with the Sharī'ah of Islam in most elements. Whatever was found to be contrary with the People of the Book was simply a matter of errors made by their uninformed masses. This is not their faith.

Existing copies of the Torah and Evangile available world-wide in

many languages also confirm this view. Please refer to the Old Testament which is equally acceptable to contemporary Jews and Christians. Given below are injunctions about slaughtered animals:

1. "And the fat of the beast that dieth of itself, and the fat of that which is torn with beasts, may be used in any other use: but ye shall in no wise eat of it." (Leviticus 7:24)
2. "Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which He hath given thee: the unlcean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart." (Deuteronomy 12:15)
3. "That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." (Acts 15:29)
4. "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils." (I Corinthians 10:20, 21)
5. "We have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication." (Acts 21:25)

These statements of the Torah and Evangile are from what is widely circulated by contemporary Bible Societies in which, despite hundreds of alterations and revisions, these things have lingered on and are almost similar to the injunctions of the Holy Qur'ān. For instance, Verse 3 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah says:

حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةُ وَالدَّمُ وَلَحْمُ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ وَالْمُنْخَنِقَةُ
وَالْمَوْقُوذَةُ وَالْمُتَرَدِّيَةُ وَالنَّطِيحَةُ وَمَا أَكَلَ السَّبُعُ إِلَّا مَا ذَكَّيْتُمْ وَمَا ذُبِحَ عَلَى
النُّصُبِ (المائدة ٣)

Prohibited for you are: the carrion, the blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah, and the animals dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring, and that which a beast has eaten - unless you have properly slaughtered it - and that which has been slaughtered before the idols ...

This verse has declared that the carrion, the blood, the flesh of swine, and what has been invoked upon with (a name) other than that of Allah, and animals dead by strangulation, dead by blow, dead by a fall, dead by goring, and that which has been torn by a beast are all unlawful. In the statements of the Torah and Evangile cited above, all these have also been ruled as unlawful, except the 'flesh of the swine.' Though, the details of the animals dead by blow or dead by a fall or dead by goring have not been specifically mentioned there, but they (almost all) are included under the injunction for those naturally dead (carrion) or dead by strangulation.

Similarly, the Holy Qur'an has stressed upon the invoking of the name of Allah when slaughtering an animal: فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ (Eat out of what the name of Allah has been recited upon - 5:4) and it has prohibited an animal upon which the name of Allah has not been recited: وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ (Do not eat out of what the name of Allah has not been recited upon - 6:121). The quotation No. 2 from the Bible places a similar stress on slaughtering an animal by invoking the name of Allah.

So it is with most matters relating to marriage as well where the faith of the People of the Book corresponds to the Sharī'ah of Islam. Please see Leviticus (6-19) which gives a long list of prohibitions most of them being what the Holy Qur'an has declared to be unlawful. So much so that it clearly states the unlawfulness of combining two sisters جمع بين الاختين in the bond of marriage at the same time and the unlawfulness of intercourse during menstruation as well. In addition to that, the Bible also says that marriage with idolators and disbelievers is not permissible. The words of the present Torah are:

> "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give upto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son." (Deuteronomy 7:3)

The Rationale of the Lawfulness of Animals Slaughtered by Jews and Christians: A Gist

The only reason why the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book and marriage with their women has been made lawful and the animals slaughtered by other disbelievers and marriage with their women has been made unlawful by the Qur'an is that in both these

cases the true and original faith of the People of the Book is in accord with the Law of Islam even today. Anything contrary to that found among their masses is no more than an ignorant practice - it has nothing to do with their original religion. Therefore, the majority of the Ṣaḥābah, the Tābi'īn and the *Mujtahid* Imāms maintain that there is no contradiction, or abrogation, or particularization in all the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-An'ām. No doubt, some scholars of Tābi'īn have taken this ignorant practice to be under the rules governing the People of the Book (holding that their slaughter, even against the injunctions of their original religion, is permissible), and have taken the view that verses of Sūrah Al-An'ām and Sūrah Al-Baqarah are abrogated or qualified by the present verse. But this view of theirs is based on the saying of the Christians: إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ (Allah is Jesus son of Mary - 5:72). It means that even if they were to say the name of Allah, they would invariably be alluding to Jesus the son of Mary. Therefore, when they slaughter an animal, the saying of the name of Allah and saying the name of Jesus upon it becomes equal. This was the ground on which the revered group of Tabi'īn had permitted the use of animals slaughtered by the People of the Book. Ibn al-'Arabī has elaborated this aspect of the subject in his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān (Ibn al-'Arabi, Aḥkām, p. 229, v. 1).

The Most Sound and Preferred View

But the stand taken on this question did not find acceptance with the learned majority of the Muslim *Ummah* as mentioned earlier with citation from Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ while Tafsīr Maẓharī, after reporting various positions on the subject, concludes as follows:

والصحيح المختار عندنا هوالقول الاول. يعنى ذبائح اهل الكتاب تاركا
للتسميه عامدًا اوعلى غير اسم الله تعالى لايوكل ان علم ذالك يقينًا او
كان غالب حالهم ذلك وهو محمل النهى عن اكل ذبائح نصارى العرب
ومحمل قول على رضى الله عنه لاتاكلوا من ذبائح نصارى بنى تغلب
فانهم لم يتمسكوا من النصرانية بشئ الابشربهم الخمر. فلعل عليا علم
من حالهم انهم لايسمون الله عند الذبح اويذبحون على غير اسم الله ،
هكذا حكم نصارى العجم ان كان عادتهم الذبح على غير اسم الله تعالى
غالبًا لايوكل ذبيحتهم ولاشك ان النصارى فى هذا الزمان لايذبحون بل

بالوقذ غالبًا فلا يحل طعامهم . (تفسير مظهری ص ٣٩ ج ٣)

And the most sound and preferred view with us is the very first one, that is, the animals slaughtered by the People of the Book on which the recitation of the name of Allah has been left out intentionally, or they have been slaughtered in a name other than that of Allah, are not lawful - if it becomes certain that the name of Allah was not recited upon them, or a name other than that of Allah was taken, or this becomes the common habit of the People of the Book. And elders who have prohibited the eating of animals slaughtered by the Christians of Arabia had this very objective behind their saying. Similarly, when Sayyidnā 'Alī said that eating from the animals slaughtered by the Christians of Banī Taghlib was not permissible because they took nothing from the religion of Christianity but the drinking of wine, the justification of his saying so lies in the likelihood of his having the proof that people from the tribe of Banī Taghlib do not invoke the name of Allah upon animals they slaughter, or else, they invoke a name other than that of Allah. The same injunction holds good for Christians belonging to areas outside the Arabian Peninsula, that is, if it becomes a matter of habit with them that they would slaughter an animal in a name other than that of Allah, then, it is not permissible to eat from what they slaughter. As for the contemporary Christians, they just do not 'slaughter' to begin with - instead, they generally kill the animal by stunning or shocking it. Therefore, their Dhabīḥah is not lawful. (Tafsīr Maẓharī, p.37, v. 3)

Muftī 'Abduh of Egypt and His Error of Judgement

Details of this debated issue have been reported here at some length because, at this point, the well-known *'Ālim* of Egypt, Muftī 'Abduh has made a grave error of judgement about which there is no doubt that it is wrong and squarely against the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*. In his Tafsīr Al-Manār, the learned author has made a twofold mistake at this juncture.

First, he has inflated the sense of the People of the Book to the limit that it has come to include the disbelievers, the Magians, the Hindus, the Sikhs and others, within it, making it so general that the very differentiation between disbelievers, the People of the Book and those

other than the People of the Book which spreads out all over the Holy Qur'ān turns out, God forbid, to be without meaning and substance.

The second error, still greater, was that he expanded the sense of 'the Food of the People of the Book' to accomodate every 'food' of the People of the Book, and which he ruled as lawful without any condition - whether they slaughter the animal, or not; and whether they invoke the name of Allah upon it, or not. Taking the circumstances and methods of their eating an animal as the criterion, he made it all *Ḥalāl* (lawful) for the Muslims.

When this *Fatwā* of his was published in Egypt, the religious scholars of Egypt itself, and those all around the whole world, lost no time in rejecting it as erroneous. Articles and treatises were written. Public demands were universally made that Mufti 'Abduh should be removed from his Office of *Iftā'*. On the other side, the disciples of the learned Muftī along with some Westophiles joined in with counter debates because this *Fatwā* was a panacea of their problems. It opened a floodgate through which Westernized people could feel comfortable with eating every 'food' which came from the Jews and Christians of Europe, even from the atheists, as *Ḥalāl* for them.

It is a great miracle of Islam that the hearts of Muslims at large are never satisfied with an act against the Sharī'ah, no matter how great was the *'Ālim* or religious scholar who committed it. This happened here too. Muslims all over the world took a stand against this error. The issue, however, did subside at that time. But, the players of the issue still exist as modern deviators or secularists who would love to prepare a new edition of Islam in which every European-oriented absurdity could be accomodated. Claiming to address the material desires of the younger generation, they have revived the same debate in the name of modernity and recension with the airs of personal research. Unfortunately, they are repeating Muftī 'Abduh. It was for this reason that this debate was taken up in some details. *Alḥamdulillah*, what was necessary has been said here. Full details, if needed, may be seen in my treatise, '*Islāmī Dhabīḥah*'.

The lawfulness of the 'food' of the Muslims for the People of the Book: What does it mean?

There is another issue here which needs to be resolved. The Qur'ān

says that the 'food' of the People of the Book is lawful for Muslims. This is obvious. But, there is the other part of the injunction, that is, the 'food' of the Muslims is lawful for the People of the Book - what does that mean? The People of the Book who just do not believe in what the Qur'ān says would hardly care for what is lawful, or unlawful. What, then, is the use of saying it?

In Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and elsewhere, it has been pointed out that this injunction too is intended for Muslims themselves whereby they are being told that the animals slaughtered by them are lawful for the People of the Book. Therefore, if they were to feed a non-Muslim from the People of the Book out of an animal slaughtered by them, it would be no act of sin. In other words, they can give to a *Kitābī* (one of the People of the Book) a part of the animal they have sacrificed. Had their *Dhabīḥa* been unlawful for the People of the Book, it would have not been permissible for Muslims to have them eat it. Thus, this injunction which apparently seems to relate to the People of the Book is, in reality, addressed to Muslims themselves.

Yet another basis for such intent appears in Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī on the authority of al-Suddī. It says that some animals, or some parts thereof, were made unlawful in the religion of Jews and Christians belonging to the People of the Book, as punishment. Therefore, that animal, or its parts, are obviously not included in the 'food' of the People of the Book. But, this sentence of the verse makes it quite clear that an animal lawful for Muslims - though not accepted as lawful by the People of the Book - shall remain lawful for Muslims, if it comes to them after having been slaughtered by the People of the Book. A hint towards it has been made in the words: وَطَعَامُكُمْ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ (and your food has been made lawful for them) appearing in the verse. So, looking at the meaning from this angle as well, the connection of the sentence with Muslims becomes clear once again.

At this point, the author of Tafsīr al-Maẓharī adds that the sentence has actually spelled out the difference that exists between two matters of importance - that of animals slaughtered and marriages made. There is a difference here. Animals slaughtered are lawful both ways - the *Dhabīḥah* of the People of the Book for Muslims and the *Dhabīḥah* of Muslims for the People of the Book. But, the matter

of the marriage of women does not work in that manner for the women from the People of the Book are lawful for Muslims while Muslim women are not lawful for the People of the Book.

Dhabīḥah of Apostates

The third problem relates to a Muslim who, God forbid, becomes a Jew or Christian. He will not be included under the definition of the People of the Book - instead, he is a *Murtadd* or apostate. An animal slaughtered by him is unlawful in accordance with the consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*. Similarly, a Muslim who has become a *Murtadd* because of rejecting any of the essentials and absolute beliefs of Islam - even though, he claims to believe in the Qur'ān and the *Rasūl* of Allah ﷺ - will also be a *Murtadd*. An animal slaughtered by him will not be lawful. Simply reading the Qur'ān or claiming to be acting in accordance with it will not entitle him to be counted as one of the People of the Book. However, if someone from another religion or community were to abandon his religion or community and become a Jew or Christian, he or she would be included under the category of the People of the Book - and an animal slaughtered by him or her would be considered lawful.

Marriage : Major Points of Guidance for Muslims

The third sentence of this verse reads as follows:

وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ وَالْمُحْصَنٰتُ مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ اِذَاۤ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ مُحْصِنِيْنَ غَيْرَ مُسٰفِحِيْنَ وَلَا مُتَّخِذِيْٓ اَخْدَانٍ

> ... and [it is lawful for you to marry] good women from among believers, and [also] good women from among those given the Books before you, provided you give them their dowers, binding yourself in marriage, not going for lust, nor having paramours."

Here, the word "*al-Muḥṣanāt*" appears at both places (translated as 'good women') which, according to the Arabic usage, could have two meanings: One, free women as opposed to bondwomen; two, chaste women. Lexically, both meanings can be taken at this place.

Therefore, out of the exegetes, Mujāhid has taken the sense of free women while explaining "*al-Muḥṣanāt*" which would mean that free women from among the People of the Book are lawful for Muslims -

bondwomen are not. (Mazharī)

But, in the sight of the majority of the learned Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'in, "*al-Muḥṣanāt*" at this place means chaste women and the verse means that the way marriage with chaste Muslim women is lawful, so too is the marriage with chaste women from among the People of the Book. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Jaṣṣāṣ & Maẓharī)

However, there is a consensus of the majority of authentic scholars that the restriction of 'chaste women' here does not mean that the very marriage with non-chaste women is unlawful. In fact, this restriction serves a purpose. It provides motivation to take a better and more appropriate course in marriage (Maẓharī & others). One can marry a Muslim woman or a woman from among the People of the Book, both are lawful; but one should never lose sight of the approach that marriage when entered into should be with a chaste woman. Joining up with sinning women in the bond of marriage is not what a good Muslim would elect to do. The truth is that marrying a vice-prone and unreliable woman amounts to ruining one's life in this world and in the Hereafter both. This should be avoided.[1] So, the restriction of 'the People of the Book' in this verse proves that marrying women from among non-Muslims, who are not included under the definition of 'the People of the Book,' is not lawful, and on this there is a consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*.

Marriage with other Non-Muslim Women

As said earlier, out of all groups of non-Muslims in this period of time, the Jews and the Christians are the only two religious communities which can be counted as 'The People of the Book.' None of the rest belonging to present religions are included within 'The People of the Book.' This general rule applies to fire-worshipping Magians, idol-worshipping Hindus, or Sikhs or Aryans or Buddhists and to others similar to them. This is so because the term, The People of the Book, refers only to those who profess to believe in a Book, the veracity of which as Heavenly Scripture and Divine Revelation stands proved on the basis of definite texts of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Obviously, these

1. However, if an unchaste woman repents from her life truly, she will be included in 'good women' and marrying her is not only permissible, but also a commendable act (Editor).

are no others but the Torah and Evangile, the followers of which still exist in this world and in this time. As for the Zabūr (The Book of Psalms) and the *Ṣuḥūf* (Scriptures; plural of *Ṣaḥīfah*) of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, they are neither preserved nor have people who claim to follow them. In so far as 'sacred books' of other religions like the Vedas, the Granth, the Book of Zartusht and similar others are concerned, the proof of their being some Scripture or Revelation on valid religious grounds does not exist. The probability that the teaching of Buddha or the books mentioned above could be transformed corollaries of Zabūr or the *Ṣuḥūf* of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام are no more than abstract assumptions not based on solid proof. Thus, with the full consensus of the Muslim *Ummah*, it stands established that, out of different faiths present in this age, the women from among the Jews and Christians are the only ones Muslims can marry lawfully. Marriage with a woman from any group or faith other than the two - unless she becomes a Muslim - is unlawful.

The verse of the Holy Qur'ān: وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكٰتِ حَتّٰى يُؤْمِنَّ (2:221) is there to confirm this implication. It means: 'And do not marry the *Mushrik* women unless they come to believe' - and all nations and peoples other than The People of The Book are included under the identity of "*al-Mushrikāt*" (disbelieving women).

So, here we have two verses of the Qur'ān which bring this subject in a clear focus. One of them, cited immediately above, says that marriage with disbelieving women is not lawful unless they become believing Muslims. The second verse is from Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the one we are talking about right now. This tells us that marriage with women from among the People of the Book is lawful.

Therefore, the learned among the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn determined the unambiguous sense of the two verses by saying that the marriage of a non-Muslim woman with a Muslim man should just not take place as a matter of principle. But, this verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah has exempted the women of The People of the Book from this generality. As such, the marriage of a Muslim with a woman from any community other than that of the Jews and Christians will not be valid unless she becomes a Muslim.

The Problem in Marrying Jewish and Christian Women

As for marrying Jewish and Christian women, that is, women from among the People of the Book, even this is not permissible in the sight of some noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

This happens to be the understanding of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ. When someone asked him about it, he would say: What Allah Almighty says in the Holy Qur'ān is clear: 'Do not marry disbelieving women until they become Muslims' - and I am not aware of a greater *Shirk* (associating others in the Divinity of Allah) than that of a person who openly declares Jesus son of Mary or some other created servant of Allah as her *Rabb*, Lord or God. (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Jaṣṣāṣ)

There was an occasion when Maimūn ibn Mihrān asked Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ: 'We live in a country with a larger population of The People of the Book. Can we marry their women and eat from the animals they slaughter?' In his reply, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ simply recited these two verses, firstly the one which prohibits marriage with disbelieving women, and then, this very verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah which declares the lawfulness of marriage with women from The People of the Book.

Maimūn ibn Mihrān said: ' I too read these two verses in the Qur'ān and I know them. But, my question is: In view of these two, what religious ruling do I follow? In reply to this question, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ once again recited these very two verses before him, and said nothing on his own. This has been interpreted by the 'Ulamā of the *Ummah* that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar was not at peace with himself even in this matter of marriage being lawful with women from among the People of the Book.

Though, in the view of the majority of the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn, marriage with women from among the People of the Book is lawful in itself as in the Qur'ān, but marrying them is not free of the many consequential disorders for one's own person, his children, rather for the whole Muslim Community, which would necessarily emerge as borne by experience. This was the basis on which they too considered marriage with women from among the People of the Book as *Makrūh* (reprehensible).

Following a narration from Shaqīq ibn Salmah, al-Jaṣṣāṣ reports in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: When Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Yamān رضى الله عنه came to Madā'in, he married a Jewish woman there. When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه found out about it, he wrote a letter to him asking him to divorce the woman. Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah رضى الله عنه wrote back: ' Is she unlawful for me?' Then, in reply, Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه wrote: ' I am not saying that she is unlawful, but women from these people do not generally have chastity, therefore, I apprehend lest immodesty finds entry into your homes through this channel.' And Imām Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan رحمة الله عليه has, in *Kitāb* al-*Āthār*, reported this event from Imām Abū Ḥanīfah. He says when Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه wrote another letter to Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah رضى الله عنه, his words were:

اعزم عليك ان لا تضع كتابى حتى تخلى سبيلها فانى اخاف ان يقتديك المسلمون فيختاروا النساء اهل الذمة لجمالهن وكفى بذلك فتنة لنساء المسلمين . (كتاب الآثار ص ١٥٦)

I hereby put you on oath that you would, before you put down this letter from your hands, divorce and release her, because I fear other Muslims start following you and begin choosing women from among the People of the Book because of their beauty, (bypassing Muslim women in the process). What greater trial could there be for Muslim women? (Kitāb al-Āthār, p. 156)

After reporting this event, Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan رحمة الله عليه has said that this is the view the Ḥanafī jurists take when they do not actually rule such marriage as unlawful but, because of other disorders and drawbacks, do take it to be *Makrūh* (reprehensible). And 'Allamāh Ibn Humām has reported in Fatḥ al-Qadīr that an event similar to that of Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah also came to pass with Talḥah and Ka'b ibn Mālik - they married women from The People of the Book on the basis of the verse in Sūrah al-Mā'idah. When Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه heard about it, he became very angry and ordered them to divorce these women (Maẓharī).

As for the age and time of Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, the great *Khalīfah* of Islam, may Allah be pleased with him, it was the best of ages. At that time, any probability, that a Jewish or Christian woman would succeed in hatching some conspiracy against Islam and Muslims by

entering into the life of a Muslim as his wife, was simply unimaginable. The only danger that lurked before them during those days was to the moral insulation of their families and homes which could be adversely affected by taking in women of doubtful integrity as wives, or that people start preferring them because of their beauty as a result of which Muslim women would be thrown in deep trouble. But, here is the Fārūqian farsightedness which keeps track of dangling disharmonies in Muslim lives and compels people of such stature to divorce the women they had taken as wives. Had they been anywhere closer to the current scenario, just imagine the kind and extent of his reaction! The problem with these people is that of dubious identity. Such people would not mind if their names are registered in the census records as Jewish or Christian, but there are many among them who take Judaism or Christianity to be a nuisance in their personal view of things and ideas. They do not believe in the Torah or the Evangile, nor do they attest to the prophethood of Moses and Jesus, may peace be upon them. In matters of belief, they are totally secular, even atheistic. That they let themselves be called Jews and Christians is no more than some communal, societal or formal convenience.

It is obvious that women from people of such background are not lawful for a Muslim under any circumstances. And even if they happen to adhere to their religion, still, accomodating them in the midst of a Muslim family amounts to bringing material and spiritual ruination on it. The conspiracies mounted against Islam and Muslims through this inroad during the later period, and which are not uncommon even today, have a tragic lesson of their own. A woman succeeding as a terminator of Muslim national power is no fiction. Such eventuality is within the realm of possibility. How can any sensible person go, irrespective of the considerations of the lawful and unlawful, even close to taking such a step?

Conclusion

According to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and the conduct of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, it is incumbent upon Muslims that they should totally abstain from marrying contemporary *Kitābī* (Jewish and Christian) women. Towards the end of the verse, instructions have also been given that should anyone has to have a

woman from among the People of the Book, then, this should be done by entering into a proper marriage contract, by keeping the woman as wife and by paying dower and fulfilling other rights. Keeping them as paramours or mistresses or indulging in open fornication with them is forbidden (*Ḥarām*).

Verses 6 - 7

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوٓا إِذَا قُمْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلَوٰةِ فَاغْسِلُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ
وَأَيْدِيَكُمْ إِلَى الْمَرَافِقِ وَامْسَحُوا بِرُءُوسِكُمْ وَأَرْجُلَكُمْ إِلَى
الْكَعْبَيْنِ ۚ وَإِن كُنتُمْ جُنُبًا فَاطَّهَّرُوا ۚ وَإِن كُنتُم مَّرْضَىٰٓ أَوْ عَلَىٰ
سَفَرٍ أَوْ جَآءَ أَحَدٌ مِّنكُم مِّنَ الْغَآئِطِ أَوْ لَـٰمَسْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَلَمْ تَجِدُوا
مَآءً فَتَيَمَّمُوا صَعِيدًا طَيِّبًا فَامْسَحُوا بِوُجُوهِكُمْ وَأَيْدِيكُم
مِّنْهُ ۚ مَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَجْعَلَ عَلَيْكُم مِّنْ حَرَجٍ وَلَـٰكِن يُرِيدُ
لِيُطَهِّرَكُمْ وَلِيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُۥ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٦﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا
نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَـٰقَهُ الَّذِى وَاثَقَكُم بِهِۦٓ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا
وَأَطَعْنَا ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ ﴿٧﴾

O those who believe, when you rise for Ṣalāh, wash your faces and your hands upto the elbows, and make *Masḥ*[1] of your heads and (wash) your feet upto the ankles. And if you are in a state of major impurity [2], cleanse yourselves well (by taking bath). And if you are sick, or in travel or one of you has come after easing himself, or you have touched women, and you find no water, then, go for some clean dust and wipe your faces and hands with it. Allah does not like to impose a problem on you; He, rather likes to cleanse you and to complete his favour upon you, so that you may be grateful. [6] **And remember Allah's favour upon you and His covenant that He has taken from you when you said, "We have listened and obeyed." And fear Allah. Allah is all-aware of what lies in the hearts.** [7]

1. *Masḥ*: Passing wet hands over something.
2. *Janābah*: Major Impurity: See note under 4:43, Vol. II.

Some injunctions of the Sharī'ah concerning the conduct of worldly life, choices in marriage and food appeared in the previous verses. This verse mentions some injunctions relating to *'Ibādāt*, acts of worship like *Ṣalāh, Wuḍū, Masḥ, Tayammum, Ghusl* and *Ṭahārah*.

Verses 8 - 10

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّٰمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ ۖ وَلَا
يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَـَٔانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا ۚ ٱعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ
لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَٱتَّقُوا ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَعَدَ ٱللَّهُ
ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا ٱلصَّٰلِحَٰتِ ۙ لَهُم مَّغْفِرَةٌ وَأَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩﴾
وَٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِـَٔايَٰتِنَآ أُولَٰٓئِكَ أَصْحَٰبُ ٱلْجَحِيمِ ﴿١٠﴾

O those who believe, be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice. And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice. Do justice. That is nearer to Taqwā. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is all-aware of what you do. [8] **Allah has promised those who believe and do good deeds: For them there is forgiveness and a great reward.** [9] **And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - they are the people of the Fire.** [10]

Commentary

The subject of the first of the three verses given above has appeared earlier in Sūrah al-Nisā' in almost the same words. The only difference is that the arrangement of words there (4:135) was: كُونُوا قَوَّٰمِينَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلَّهِ while, here (5:8), it has been said: كُونُوا قَوَّٰمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ (be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice). A delicate reason for the alternation in words appearing earlier and later in these two verses has been given by Abū Ḥayyān in his Tafsīr Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ a gist of which is given below.

There are usually two causes which hold people back from doing justice and then make them do the unjust and the oppressive. The first one is taking the side of your own self, or that of your friends and relatives. Enmity with someone is the other cause. The verse in Sūrah al-Nisā' is addressing itself to the first subject while this verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah is oriented to the other.

Therefore, the words which follow this sentence in Sūrah Al-Nisā' are: وَلَوْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَ الْاَقْرَبِيْنَ that is, 'even though against yourselves or the parents, and the kinsfolk ...' After the sentence of Sūrah al-Mā'idah cited above, the words which follow in this verse are: وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا that is, ' And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice ...' So, the essential message of this verse of Sūrah al-Nisā' is: When it comes to doing justice, let nothing affect you, neither your own self, nor your parents, nor your relatives. If the demand of justice happens to be against them, stay with nothing but justice. The essence of this verse from Sūrah al-Mā'idah is that hostility against an enemy should not affect your sense of justice to the limit that you start working against the demands of justice to harm your enemy.

This is the reason why, by placing '*al-qist*' (justice) first in the verse of the Sūrah al-Nisā', it was said: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَآءَ لِلّٰهِ (... be upholders of justice, witnesses for Allah ...) and, by placing '*lillāh*' (for Allah) first in the verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, it was said: كُوْنُوْا قَوّٰمِيْنَ لِلّٰهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِالْقِسْطِ (... be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice ...) - though, both these modes serve the same purpose end-wise. It is obvious that a person who stands for justice will stand for none but Allah, and one who stands for none but Allah will do nothing but justice. But, when it comes to protecting personal interest or favouring friends and relatives, one may be tempted to justify the thought that the act of caring for relationships here is also for Allah. Therefore, by bringing in the word, '*al-qist*' (justice) first at that point, the message given was that the concession which is contrary to justice cannot be for Allah. And in Sūrah al-Mā'idah, where the purpose was to enjoin justice with enemies, the word '*lillāh*' (for Allah) was brought in first, which took away the chances of sentimental attachments overpowering human nature. The point is, when you stand for Allah, the inevitable outcome should be an equal justice with enemies as well.

In short, both these verses of Sūrah Al-Nisā' and Sūrah al-Mā'idah carry two elements of guidance. The first commands full adherence to justice whether dealing with friends or foes. No weakness should be shown on account of any relationship, friendly or hostile. The second instruction given in these two verses is that no one should avoid recording true evidence and stating what is the truth in honesty with

Allah, so that the decision makers face no difficulty in arriving at the true, sound and just decision.

The Holy Qur'an has stressed upon this subject in several verses with various angles telling people not to drag their feet and be tardy in appearing as true witnesses. Verse 2:283 from Surah Al-Baqarah carries a very clear command: وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ (And do not conceal the testimony. And whoever conceals it, his heart is, surely, a sinner) which proves that to give a true evidence is an obligation and its concealment, a grave sin.

But, the Holy Qur'an has also kept in sight the impediments to the fulfillment of such duty. The central obstacle is that a witness is made to appear in the courts repeatedly where he is subjected to absurd cross-examinations aimed at breaking the witness and invalidating his testimony. The result is that anyone marked to be a witness is actually marked out for trouble. Kept away from what he does for living, he becomes a target of all sorts of inconveniences just for nothing. Therefore, when the Holy Qur'an says that the giving of true evidence is necessary (*Wajib*), it also says: وَلَا يُضَارَّ كَاتِبٌ وَّلَا شَهِيدٌ (And neither scribe nor witness should be made to suffer - 2:282).

A carefully investigated view of the courts and cases today will reveal that spot witnesses and true witnesses are almost extinct. Any sensible person who happens to see something unusual taking place somewhere would instinctively run away from there lest he gets grabbed as a witness. The police fills out its case report with made-up witnesses the result of which could hardly be any different than what is being observed day in and day out. Not even five, or ten per cent cases can be decided on the basis of truth and justice. Courts too cannot do anything about it. The kind of witnesses they receive are the only basis on which they have to arrive at their conclusions and decide cases.

But, no one seems to notice the initial error being made in this matter. If witnesses are treated nicely and they are not harrassed time and again, good people would not hesitate to come forward to register their testimony as required under the teachings of the Qur'an. But, what is happening here is that the first investigation of a case is handled by the police and it is, by itself, enough to drive a witness cra-

zy by his repeated appearances at the station. Once a witness, he would never be a witness again, not even on his dead body. Then the case goes to the court, if it does. And if it does, there comes the problem of dates, one after the other, they keep coming, next and next. But, the witness becomes the victim who has to undergo the punishment of a crime he never committed when he comes to record his presence on every such new date. This long-hauled rule of procedure, a sick vestige of the British colonist, has corrupted our courts and judicial departments. One naturally tends to compare it with the form of simple and speedy justice provided in modern-day *Ḥijāz* and elsewhere in which the number of pending cases cannot become so large, nor would they prolong so continuously, nor does it cause any harrassment to witnesses while fulfilling their religious duty.

To sum up, the blessings of an Islamic legal system can be seen even today by simply restructuring the law of evidence, and its attending rule of procedure, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'ān which require the knowers of truth to testify and which also command that they should not be put to any inconvenience and that they should be free to go within the shortest possible time after recording their testimony.

Some forms of testimony

Finally, at this point, it is important to know that the sense of witness and testimony in current usage has become limited to testifying before a judge or Committee hearing suits and disputes. But, in the terminology of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, the word *'Shahādah'* (testimony) has a much broader sense. For instance, the medical certificate given to a sick person which states that he is unable to report on duty, or that he should be retired on medical grounds, is also a testimony. If the statement made in it was contrary to the actual condition of the sick person, it will turn into a false evidence and become a grave sin.

Similarly, checking student papers and marking them out during tests and examinations is also an act of testifying. If any increase or decrease in the marks alloted in them was done knowingly or carelessly, that too shall be a false evidence, which is unlawful, and a grave sin.

Certificates and testimonials awarded to successfully graduating students bear a witness that the awardee has the capability of doing what his or her documents say. But, should it be that the person concerned is, in fact, not so capable, then, everyone who has signed on that certificate or testimonial stands charged with the crime of false attestation.

Correspondingly, casting a vote in favour of a candidate seeking election to assemblies, councils and public bodies is also a testimony in which the voter bears witness that, in his or her knowledge and estimation, the particular candidate is worthy of becoming a representative or spokesperson of the country and its people, both in terms of his ability and merits and in terms of his honesty and trustworthiness as well.

Now, figure out how many of our representatives are there about whom this 'evidence' would prove to be true and correct? But, there is little that can be said about our electorate which seems to take this exercise of voting as some game where one either wins or loses. That, to them, is all there is to it. Yet, the right of vote is sold for money, or cast under pressure, or thrown away for fickle friends and shady promises. Leave others alone, even educated and observing Muslims fail to realize while voting for undeserving people that they were inviting the curse and punishment of Allah by putting their false evidence on record.

There is yet another way of looking at the casting of votes to elect representatives in accordance with the Holy Qur'ān. This is called '*Shafā'ah*' (recommendation or *Sifārish*). It means that the voter approves of the candidate of his choice and recommends that he should be elected as a representative. The injunction of the Holy Qur'ān relevant to this situation has appeared earlier in the words given below:

وَمَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً حَسَنَةً يَّكُنْ لَّهٗ نَصِيْبٌ مِّنْهَا وَمَنْ يَّشْفَعْ شَفَاعَةً سَيِّئَةً يَّكُنْ
لَّهٗ كِفْلٌ مِّنْهَا

Whoever makes a good recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it (in the Hereafter). And whoever makes a bad recommendation, there shall be for him a share from it - (4:85).

It means that anyone who makes a good, true and justified recommendation, then, he too will get a share from the good deed of the person he has recommended. And a person who makes a bad recommendation, that is, favours someone undeserving and bad to succeed through his recommendation, then, he too shall get a share from the bad deeds of the person he has recommended. Thus, when a candidate like this will, during his tenure of office, go on doing what is wrong and impermissible, it is obvious that the curse of his evil doings will fall on the voter as well.

The vote has a third status in the sight of the Sharī'ah of Islam - that of advocacy (*Wakālah*). This is, as if, the voter makes the candidate his representative and agent on his or her behalf. But, had this agency been connected with one of his personal rights and the gain or loss from it would have affected his person alone, then, he would have been responsible for it personally. However, that situation does not prevail here, because this agency concerns rights which the entire nation shares with him. Therefore, should a person contribute to the success of an undeserving candidate by voting for him as his representative, then, the sin of bulldozing the rights of the entire nation rests on his shoulders.

To recapitulate, our vote has a three-pronged status: *Shahādah* (evidence), *Shafā'ah* (Recommendation) and *Wakālah* (Advocacy or representation in common rights). Under all three conditions, voting for a good and deserving person brings great reward the fruits of which are bound to reach the voter. Similarly, voting for someone undeserving and uncouth is false evidence, unjustified recommendation and impermissible advocacy all in one, so, the evil fruits of his thoughtless voting shall stand recorded in the voter's log of deeds.

Therefore, it is the duty of every Muslim, man and woman, that he or she must fully investigate into the background of the candidate being voted for well before the vote is cast. Let them make sure that the candidate is deserving, capable and honest - and not otherwise. Negligence, apathy and heedlessness are poor reasons to go about committing such grave crimes. If done for no reason, it is absurdity at its worst.

Verses 11 - 12

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ٱذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ ٱللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ هَمَّ قَوْمٌ أَن
يَبْسُطُوٓا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَكَفَّ أَيْدِيَهُمْ عَنكُمْ ۖ وَٱتَّقُوا ٱللَّهَ ۚ
وَعَلَى ٱللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَخَذَ ٱللَّهُ مِيثَٰقَ
بَنِىٓ إِسْرَٰٓءِيلَ وَبَعَثْنَا مِنْهُمُ ٱثْنَىْ عَشَرَ نَقِيبًا ۖ وَقَالَ ٱللَّهُ إِنِّى
مَعَكُمْ ۖ لَئِنْ أَقَمْتُمُ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَيْتُمُ ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَءَامَنتُم بِرُسُلِى
وَعَزَّرْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَقْرَضْتُمُ ٱللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا لَّأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنكُمْ
سَيِّـَٔاتِكُمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّكُمْ جَنَّٰتٍ تَجْرِى مِن تَحْتِهَا ٱلْأَنْهَٰرُ ۚ فَمَن كَفَرَ
بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ مِنكُمْ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ ٱلسَّبِيلِ ﴿١٢﴾

O those who believe, remember Allah's favour upon you, when some people planned to lay their hands on you, and he kept their hands away from you. And fear Allah. And in Allah the believers should place their trust. [11] **And Allah has made the Children of Israel take a pledge. And We appointed twelve chiefs from among them. And Allah said, "I am surely with you. If you establish Ṣalāh, and pay Zakāh, and believe in My Messengers, and hold them in reverence, and advance to Allah a goodly loan, I shall certainly write off your evil deeds and I shall certainly admit you into Gardens beneath which rivers flow. So, whoever from you disbelieves after that has lost the straight path."** [12]

Commentary

In the seventh verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah which appeared earlier Allah Almighty has asked Muslims to remember the pledge taken from them to which they professed belief and obedience:

وَاذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيثَاقَهُ الَّذِي وَاثَقَكُم بِهِ إِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا
وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ

And remember Allah's favour upon you and His Covenant that He has taken from you when you said, "We have listened and obeyed." And fear Allah ... (5:7)

This pledge is the pledge of obedience to Allah and His Messenger and the pledge of practical adherence to the Sharī'ah of Islām. This is technically known as the *Kalimah* or the statement of creed and which is:

لا اله الا الله محمد رسول الله

(Lā ilāha il-lal-lāhū Muḥammadur-Rasū-lul-lāh):

"There is no god worthy of worship but Allah Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

Every Muslim who says this *Kalimah* is bound by this pledge. In the verse which follows (5:8), some important articles of the pledge, that is, particular religious injunctions have been described. These enjoin equity and justice for friend and foe alike and teach justice and tolerance - not revenge - for enemies once overpowered. This pledge is, in itself, a great blessing of Allah, therefore, it has been made to begin with: اذكروا نعمت الله عليكم (And remember Allah's favour upon you ...).

By beginning the present verse (5:11) with the same sentence : اذكروا نعمت الله عليكم (And remember Allah's favour upon you), the objective is to tell Muslims that as long as they remained faithful to their pledge, Almighty Allah blessed them with power and excellence in the present world and with high ranks for the Hereafter, shielding them all along against their enemies, in war and in peace.

This verse particularly mentions how enemies conspired to destroy Muslims and kill their Prophet on so many occasions, but Almighty Allah foiled all their plans and put them to disgrace - 'some people planned to lay their hands on you, and He kept their hands away from you.'

Speaking generally, there are innumerable events on the annals of the history of Islam when the plans made by disbelievers were seen rolling in dust by Divine grace. But, there are some special events as well which our learned commentators have pinpointed as the substantiation of this verse - for example, in the Musnad of 'Abd al-Razzāq, a report from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه says:

In a *Jihād*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Companions رضى الله عنهم اجمعين stopped to rest at one stage. The noble Companions scattered out to rest at various spots. The Holy Prophet ﷺ stopped by a tree, all by

himself. He hung his weapons on a branch of the tree. A villager from among the enemies pounced on this occasion, dashed in and took possession of the sword of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, taking it out from the sheath, he threatened him by saying: مَنْ يَمْنَعُكَ مِنِّي (That is, 'now tell me who can save you from my hand?').

Undaunted, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'Allah عزوجل (the Mighty, the Exalted)'. The villager repeated what he had said earlier, that is, 'now tell me who can save you from my hand?' Once again, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said with the same composure: 'Allah عزوجل After two or three exchanges in this manner, it was the awe of some unseen power which forced the challenger to put the sword back in its sheath. At that point, the Holy Prophet ﷺ called the Companions in and narrated what had transpired. The villager was still sitting by his side. He said nothing to him. (Ibn Kathīr).

As part of an explanation of this verse, reports from some Companions say that there was an occasion when Ka'b ibn Ashraf, a Jew, had invited the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to his house with the intention of killing him. Allah Almighty told him about this evil intention which foiled his conspiracy (Ibn Kathīr). Also reported from Mujāhid, 'Ikrimah and others is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once went to Yahūd ibn Nuḍayr to talk about a matter of concern. He asked him to sit under a wall, engaged him in a conversation while secretly he appointed 'Amr ibn Jaḥsh to scale the wall from behind and throw down a rock from the top of the wall over him. Allah Almighty let His Messenger, may he remain blessed and protected for ever, know about their hostile intention and he immediately rose and moved away from there (Ibn Kathīr).

There is no contradiction about these events. All of them can be taken to be substantiating the present verse where, after mentioning the unseen protection provided to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to Muslims in general, it was said: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ (And fear Allah. And in Allah the believers should place their trust).

First of all, what is being said here is that this blessing from Allah is not restricted to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, rather, the real cause of this Divine support and protection is the quality of *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) and *Tawakkul* (Trust in Him). Any nation, or indi-

vidual who lives by these two virtues, in any time and in any place, will have the support and protection from Almighty Allah in the same manner. How well this was put in two lines by poet Iqbal:

فضائے بدر پیدا کر فرشتے تیری نصرت کو

اُتر سکتے ہیں گردوں سے قطار اندر قطار اب بھی

Create the atmosphere of Badr, for your help the angels could
Descend from the heavens, file after file, even now!

It is also possible to refer this sentence back to the set of previous verses where Muslims have been commanded to treat their worst enemies with courtesy and justice. If so, the sentence would indicate that the teaching of courtesy and tolerance in the case of such avowed enemies may amount to making a political error which may put them back on their feet. Therefore, in this sentence, Muslims were warned that this tolerance and courtesy will bring absolutely no harm to them only if they continue being the kind of people who fear Allah and trust in Him. In fact, instead of giving the enemies the courage and opportunity to renew their hostility against them, this behaviour of theirs will become the cause of bringing them closer to Islam into the Muslim area of influence. Besides, *Taqwā* or the fear of Allah is the only factor which can compel a person to abide by a pledge both physically and spiritually. Wherever this quality of *Taqwā* remains missing, pledges get readily broken as commonly witnessed these days. So, the earlier verse (5:8) which mentions a pledge, also directed to واتقوا الله (Fear Allah) towards the end. The same assertion was repeated here. Finally, this whole verse gives a clear hint that a Muslim victory with Divine support does not simply depend upon outward logistics and hardware, instead of that, the secret of their real power lies in *Taqwā* (the fear of Allah) and *Tawakkul* (trust in Him).

After the present verse has mentioned the pledge taken from Muslims and rewards it would bring when fulfilled, the second verse brings into focus another side of the issue. It clarifies that this taking of pledges is not something special to Muslims. Similar pledges were also taken earlier, from other communities as well. But, they failed to fulfill them. Therefore, various punishments were sent upon them. It is said in the verse that Almighty Allah had taken a pledge from the

Banī Isra'īl (The Children of Israel). The pledge was taken in a particular form. The people from Banī Isra'īl were divided over twelve tribes. One chief from each such tribe was chosen to represent them. Every chief from each of the twelve tribes declared on his behalf and on behalf of his whole tribe that they would adhere to this Divine Covenant. Thus, these twelve chiefs took that responsibility on behalf of the entire people of Banī Isra'īl which entailed that they would themselves adhere to this pledge as well as make their tribe do so.

Worth noting at this point is the cardinal principle of Islam in matters of honour, merit, office and recognition which, in the words of the Persian poet, Jāmī, is:

بندہ عشق شدی ترك نسب کن جامی

که دریں راہ فلاں بن فلاں چیزے نیست

You have become a servant in love, forget about your lineage, O Jāmī!

For, on this highway, so and so the son of so and so means nothing.

The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم had declared this in full clarity when delivering his historic Address on the occasion of his Last Ḥajj by saying that Islam does not recognize any dividing line between Arabs and non-Arabs, black or white, high caste or low caste. Whoever enters Islam becomes a brother to all Muslims. The distinctions of status, lineage, colour, country and language were the idols and icons of the Days of Ignorance - Islam has broken them all. But, it does not mean that one should not consider family background when harnessed to establish order and effeciency in administrative matters.

It is but natural that people of a tribe or family are more likely to trust a known member of their group as compared to others. Such a person is expected to understand and accomodate the feelings of his group much better because he knows their psychological reflexes in detail. When a pledge was taken from the twelve tribes of Banī Isra'īl, it was based on this very strategy whereby one chief from each of the tribes was made responsible for its compliance.

The same consideration of administrative expediency and a peaceful resolution of possible conflict was made when the Banī Isra'il were highly agitated about a shortage of water. Sayyidnā Mūsā علیہ السلام

prayed to Allah and as commanded by Him he struck his staff against a rock. Then, Almighty Allah made twelve streams flow from this rock for each of the twelve tribes. Allah Almighty has mentioned this great favour in the Holy Qur'an (Surah al-A'raf, 7:160) in the following words: وَقَطَّعْنٰهُمُ اثْنَتَيْ عَشْرَةَ أَسْبَاطًا أُمَمًا (And We divided them into twelve tribes, as separate communities) and: فَانْبَجَسَتْ مِنْهُ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ عَيْنًا (So, twelve springs gushed forth from it [one for each tribe]). As for this figure of twelve, it is rather unusual and lends to popular interpretations.

When the Ansar of Madinah came to invite the Holy Prophet ﷺ to their city, he took a pledge from them in the form of *Bay'at*. In this pledge also, the twelve chiefs of the tribes of Anṣar, acting on behalf of their tribes, gave their hands in the blessed hands of the Holy Prophet ﷺ giving a solemn pledge of adherence popularly known as *Bay'at* (or *Bay'ah* in its pausal form).

Three of these chiefs were from the tribe of 'Aws and nine from the tribe of Khazraj (Ibn Kathir).

According to another narration from Sayyidna Jabir ibn Samurah appearing in al-Bukhari and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said that people and their needs shall stay covered until such time that twelve *Khulafa'* (ruling authorities) will be leading them. After having reported this narration, Ibn Kathir has commented that no word from this ḥadith proves that these twelve Imams or *Khulafa'* would rule one after the other, continuously. On the contrary, they could also appear spaced out from each other with breaks in between. Thus, there were four *Khulafa'* - Sayyidna Abu Bakr, Sayyidna 'Umar al-Faruq, Sayyidna 'Uthman al-Ghani and Sayyidna 'Ali al -Murtaḍa رضى الله عنهم - succeeding in that order. After the passage of some time in between, Sayyidna 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Aziz was accepted by the consensus of the *Ummah* as the fifth righteous *Khalifah*' of Islam.

Now, returning back to the pledge taken from the Bani Isra'il, it will be recalled that Allah had made the twelve chiefs from their twelve tribes responsible for them and to them He said: إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ (I am with you). It means if they fulfilled the pledge themselves and resolved to make others do the same, Divine support shall be with them. After that, the verse enumerates some articles of this pledge, then re-

fers to the breach of trust committed by the Banī Isra'īl and the subsequent punishment that descended upon them.

Thus, the sentence: إِنِّي مَعَكُمْ (I am with you) which appears before mentioning the articles of the pledge is there to tell two things. Firstly, if they stood by the pledge, Divine support will be with them which they would witness on every step they take. Secondly, they must realize that Allah is with them everywhere, all the time. He is watching over this pledge. Nothing that they intend, think, plan and do will remain outside the reach of His knowledge. He sees and hears what they conceal and He is also aware of their intentions and plans. They cannot escape His grip by breaking the pledge. Then come the articles of the pledge, the first being 'the establishment of Salāh' followed by 'the paying of *Zakāh* properly.' This tells us that the people of Sayyidnā Mūsā علیه السلام were also obligated with the duties of Salāh and *Zakāh* much before Islam. Other Qur'ānic hints and authentic reports prove that these duties were not peculiar to Banī Isra'īl alone. In fact, they have been enjoined by every prophet and every Sharī'ah.

The third article of the pledge is that they should believe in all prophets and messengers sent by Allah and help them achieve their objective of spreading true guidance. Since many messengers were to come to the Banī Isra'īl, they were the ones particularly charged to do this. Though, the status of basic *'Īmān* or faith comes ahead of actual acts such as Ṣalāh and Zakāh, yet, in this pledge, what was to be actually done was what was placed first. Prophets and messengers who were to come, would be coming later. Since the matter of believing in them and helping them in their mission was to happen later, that part was placed later in the text.

The fourth article of the pledge is: أَقْرَضْتُمُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (... and advance to Allah a goodly loan ...). "*Qarḍan Ḥasana*" (a goodly loan) means that it should be with absolute sincerity without any worldly expediency behind it. When spending in the way of Allah, one should spend what one holds dear - never trying to get away by giving out of the spare, the extra and the worthless. Spending in the way of Allah has been expressed as 'the giving of loan' because the return of a loan is taken as due legally, customarily and morally. So, one should spend in the way of Allah believing that it will be returned definitely.

Since the obligatory *Zakāh* has already been mentioned at its place, the introduction of *Qarḍ Ḥasan* here indicates that it is referring to *Ṣadaqāt* and *Khayrāt* (charities) other than *Zakāh*. It also tells us that Muslims are not done with all financial responsibilities by simply paying off the *Zakāh* due on them. There are other financial rights to be fulfilled, such as, making a *Masjid* where needed. When governments do not initiate or support religious education for children and adults, the responsibility of establishing and running institutions devoted to imparting religious education rests on none but Muslims themselves. The difference between the two is that *Zakāh* is *Farḍ 'Ayn* (absolute obligation on every individual) while the kind of charities mentioned above are *Farḍ Kifāyah* (an obligation of sufficiency as explained below).

Farḍ Kifāyah means: should some individuals or a group from the Muslim community take care of such needs, other Muslims are released from the burden of responsibility; and, should no one come forward to do so, everyone becomes a sinner. How terrible are the circumstances in which schools for religious education are operating in our time is known and braved by only those who have made it a mission of their lives to keep serving their Faith through these institutions of religious learning. As for paying *Zakāh*, Muslims know that it is an obligation on them. It is strange that, despite this knowledge, there are very few who pay their *Zakāh* - and there are still fewer who take the trouble of paying the full *Zakāh* due on them after a full accounting. And even those who rarely pay out the full amount of *Zakāh* due on them, think that they have done all they were supposed to do and that there is nothing more due on them. Go to them about some urgent need of a *Masjid* and they will come up with *Zakāh* money. The same thing happens with religious institutions - they too hardly get any financial support other than *Zakāh*. Although, these are duties, other than *Zakāh*, which Muslims have to fulfill - this has been made clear in this verse of the Qur'ān and in many other verses similar to it.

Towards the end of the verse, after enumerating the articles of the pledge, it was also clarified that the fulfillment of the pledge on their part will be amply rewarded, even their past sins will be forgiven and they will have the eternal comfort and security of Paradise. But, final-

ly they were given to understand that should any of them elect to ignore such clear statements and go on to the limits of rejection and rebellion, they should know that they have left the straight path only to their self-appointed ruin.

Verses 13 - 14

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوْبَهُمْ قٰسِيَةً ج
يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ عَنْ مَّوَاضِعِهٖ لا وَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ص
وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلٰى خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ
وَاصْفَحْ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا
نَصٰرٰٓى اَخَذْنَا مِيْثَاقَهُمْ فَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ ص فَاَغْرَيْنَا
بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ط وَسَوْفَ يُنَبِّئُهُمُ
اللّٰهُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

So, because they broke their pledge, We cursed them and made their hearts hardened. They move words away from their places, and they have overlooked a good deal of the Advice they were given. And every now and then you come accross a certain treachery from them all but a few. So, forgive them and forego. Indeed, Allah loves the good-in-deed. [13] **And from those who say, "We are Christians," We took a pledge. So, they have overlooked a good deal of the Advice they were given. So, We had them stuck with enmity and malice among them right through the Day of Doom. And Allah shall tell them what they were doing.** [14]

Commentary

The first verse is telling us that Banī Isra'īl were heedless to clear instructions given to them. Then, they broke the pledge for which they were punished. There were two kinds of punishment which visited Banī Isra'īl because of their misdeeds and contumacy:

1. Manifest and perceptible, like the hail of stones and rocks or the overturning of land mass, which find mention in several verses of the Qur'ān.

2. Intellectual and spiritual, as if their very minds and hearts were transformed in punishment for their contumacy which made them incapable of thinking and feeling and they went on sinking deeper in the curse of their sins.

The verse opens with the words: فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِمْ مِّيْثَاقَهُمْ لَعَنّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوْبَهُمْ قٰسِيَةً . It means that it was because of their contravention of the solemn pledge that Allah made them far-removed from His mercy (that is, from its effects, which is the reality of '*La'nah*' or curse - Hadrat Thanavi) and made their hearts hardened against any penetration of truth. This removal from mercy and the hardening of hearts has been likened to " *Ran* " (stain or rust) by the Holy Qur'an in Surah al-Mutaffifin: كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ . It means that the reason why they reject open verses of the Qur'an and all too manifest signs is that the stain of sins has settled down on their hearts. In a hadith, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When someone commits a sin for the first time, a black dot gets stamped on the heart. He feels the pinch of this evil presence all the time. It is like a black stain on a white cloth which is a constant sore of the eye. Now, if he gets chastened, repents and resolves not to do it again, that dot is erased; and should he become care-free and start a spree of other sins, a black dot for each subsequent sin will keep adding up, so much so, that the clean slate of his heart will turn jet black with these dots of stain. At that stage, the state of his heart will become very much like a pot placed upside down in which nothing goes in but to come out instantly. Therefore, nothing good settles down in his heart for he has fallen into a state of moral inertia - to him nothing good is good and no evil is evil. Rather, the opposite becomes his more likely approach - he starts taking defect as merit, vice as virtue and sin as reward. Thus armed with his crooked thinking, he goes on riding high in his rebellion and contumacy. This is a cash and spot punishment of his sin which he gets right here in this mortal world.

Some respected elders have said: ان من جزاء الحسنة الحسنة بعدها وان من جزاء السيئة السيئة بعدها , that is, the cash reward of a good deed is that one gets the Taufiq (the ability given by Allah) of doing another good deed. Similarly, the cash reward of a sin is that one's heart starts being attracted by other sins soon after the first. Thus, obedience and disobedience both have a pull of their own - one good invites another good and one evil attracts other evils and sins.

Referring back to the breach of trust committed by the Banī Isrā'īl, it can be said that the cash punishment due against it was that they were removed from Divine mercy - which is the greatest medium of salvation. And their hearts became so hardened that they stooped to the level of 'moving words away from their places' which means that they alter the Word of God - in words or meanings or recitation - all of which have been described in the Holy Qur'ān and the books of *Aḥādīth*, some of which have been acknowledged by European Christians as well (Tafsīr Usmānī).

The result of the intellectual and spiritual punishment mentioned above was that they forgot to take advantage of the good counsel given to them: فَنَسُوْا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ . Then, this punishment stuck glued to them: وَلَا تَزَالُ تَطَّلِعُ عَلٰى خَآئِنَةٍ مِّنْهُمْ that is, the Prophet of Islam would keep knowing about one or the other breaches, deceptions and treacheries committed by them. The exception is indicated in: إِلَّا قَلِيْلًا مِّنْهُمْ (but a few) which refers to people like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām and others who were followers of the faith of the People of the Book before they became true Muslims.

Upto this point, the description of the misconduct of the Banī Isrā'īl was obviously demanding enough that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم should hold them in contempt and never allow them to come to him. Therefore, in the last sentence of this verse, the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was: فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاصْفَحْ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ (So forgive them and forego. Indeed, Allah loves the good-in-deed). It means that, despite their peculiar condition being what it is, it is better that the Prophet of Islam abstains from doing what is otherwise quite natural. In other words, he should not treat them with contempt or hatred because after knowing what they are - hardhearted and cold - the chances that any good counsel would affect them are very remote. Granted. But, toleration and civility of morals are wonder virtues which could probe out some sense and sensibility from out of such insensate people. Even if this effort to drive some sense into them fails, something worth doing still remains - keeping one's own matters and morals correct is, after all, quite necessary. Allah Almighty likes what is done with good grace - and it will definitely bring Muslims closer to Him.

From the first verse, 5:13, which dealt with the breach of trust by Jews and their punishment for it, we now move to the next verse, 5:14, which refers to Christians: وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى . In this verse, the punishment described for Christians is mutual dissension. Being for their breach of trust, this will continue right upto the Last Day.

Looking at the contemporary scene, one may have doubts about Christians who seem to be united. The answer is that the present statement covers genuine Christians, observing and abiding. As for those who have moved away from their own religion turning into non-conformist, secular or atheistic individuals or groups, they are, for all practical purposes, out of the list of Christians - even though, they may count them as Christians among the nationalities of a country. If, among such people, that religious dissension and mutual hostility does not exist, it would not be contrary to this verse - because the conflict was based on religion, once the religion is not there, conflict too would not be there. As said earlier, this verse describes people who profess and practice the religion of Christianity - and their division is well-known.

Given below is a brief reference from *Taysir* in the marginal notes of commentator, al-Bayḍāwī which reports that there were three sects among Christians originally:

1. *Fisturyah* (Nestorians) who took Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus) as the son of God.

2. *Ya'qubiyah* (Jacobites) who believed in Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus) himself as one with God.

3. *Malka'iyah* (Malkites) who believed in Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus) as one of the Trinity.

And it goes without saying that in the presence of such major divisions in matters of belief, mutual malice is inevitable.

Verses 15 - 18

يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ كَثِيْرًا مِّمَّا كُنْتُمْ
تُخْفُوْنَ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَيَعْفُوْا عَنْ كَثِيْرٍ ۬ ط قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ

نُورٌ وَّكِتٰبٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾ يَهْدِي بِهِ اللّٰهُ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهُ سُبُلَ
السَّلٰمِ وَيُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيَهْدِيهِمْ إِلٰى
صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٦﴾ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوٓا إِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ
الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ؕ قُلْ فَمَنْ يَّمْلِكُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا إِنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ
يُّهْلِكَ الْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ
مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ؕ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ
عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصٰرٰى نَحْنُ
أَبْنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَأَحِبَّآؤُهُ ؕ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ بِذُنُوبِكُمْ ؕ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ
بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ ؕ يَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا ز وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾

O people of the Book, there has come to you Our Messenger disclosing to you much of what you have been concealing of the Book, while he passes over much. [15]

There has come to you from Allah a Light and clear Book; with it Allah guides those who follow His pleasure in the pathways of peace, and brings them out, by His will, from the depths of darkness into the light, and guides them to a straight path. [16]

Certainly, gone infidel are those who say, "God is the Masīḥ son of Maryam (Jesus son of Mary)." Say, "Who then has the power to do anything against Allah if He wills to eliminate the Masīḥ son of Maryam and his mother and all those on earth?" And to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them. He creates what He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything. [17]

And the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the sons of Allah and His favourites." Say, "Why then would He punish you for your sins? In fact, you are just human, among those He created. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills." And to Allah belongs the

kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what lies between them, and to Him is the return. [18]

Commentary

Refuted here in this verse is only one saying of the Christians - which is the belief of a sect among them - that Sayyidna Masih عليه السلام is God. But, the argument employed in the refutation virtually covers the false beliefs of all sects against the inalienable principle of *Tauhid*, that is the Oneness of Allah. This may be a belief in a son of God or a belief in one of the three Gods - the argument refutes all of them.

That Sayyidna Masih and his blessed mother have been mentioned here jointly could be because of two wise considerations. Firstly, it is the humility of Sayyidna Masih before Allah *Ta'ala* that he could never think of saving himself against the will of Allah, or his mother whose care and service a good son considers dearer than his own life. Secondly, by doing so, the view of the sect which takes Sayyidah Maryam as one of the three Gods also stands refuted.

Also noteworthy at this point is the mention of the death of Sayyidna 'Isa and Sayyidah Maryam, peace be upon both of them, as a supposition - although, the death of Sayyidah Maryam was no supposition at the time of the revelation of the Qur'an; it had already occured, in fact. The reason for this may either be the superimposition (*Taghlib*) of the desired subject, that is, since the real intent here was to describe the death of Sayyidna 'Isa as a supposition, the mention of his blessed mother was also made as a corollary of the same subject, even though, her death had already occured - or, it can also be said that the expression means: The way We have made death take away Sayyidah Maryam, it lies within Our power to make it overtake Sayyidna Masih and the rest of the creation as well. And the statement: يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ (He creates what He wills - 5:17), is there to refute this particular base which Christians use to deify Sayyidna Masih because they reason out that his birth came to pass, against all rules of nature operative in this world, without a father and from the mother alone - had he too been a human being, he would have been born through a mother and father both, very much in accordance with the natural law.

This one sentence answers the reasoning by saying that Allah has the most perfect and the most comprehensive power to create what He

wills and how He wills. The same doubt has been removed in the verse: إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسٰى عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ كَمَثَلِ اٰدَمَ (Surely, the case of 'Īsā, in the sight of Allah, is like the case of Ādam - 3:59) where it has been established that the creation of Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام as separate from the habitual law of nature cannot become an argument in favour of his being taken as God.

The reason lies in pondering that Allah *Ta'ālā* did create Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام without a father and mother both. He has the power, all power, over everything. He is the Creator and the Master and the most worthy of worship. No one else can be associated with His Divinity as a partner or sharer.

Verse 19

يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلُنَا يُبَيِّنُ لَكُمْ عَلٰى فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَا جَآءَنَا مِنْۢ بَشِيْرٍ وَّلَا نَذِيْرٍ فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَشِيْرٌ وَّنَذِيْرٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

O people of the Book, Our Messenger has come to you making things clear to you after a gap between Messengers, lest you were to say, "There has not come to us a bearer of good news, and a warner." So, now there has come to you a bearer of good news, and a warner. And Allah is powerful over everything. [19]

Commentary

The word, "*fatrah*" in: عَلٰى فَتْرَةٍ مِّنَ الرُّسُلِ (after a gap between Messengers) literally means to slacken, to become dormant or to suspend or to terminate an activity. Leading authorities in *Tafsīr* have given this very meaning of *fatrah* in this verse. It signifies the suspension of the coming of prophets for a certain interval of time which is the period of time in between Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the Last of the Prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم.

Verification of the Gap

According to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, there is a period of one thousand and seven hundred years between Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليهما السلام. During this whole period, prophets kept

coming with their missions without any gap. To Banī Isrā'īl alone, one thousand prophets were sent during this period - not included in which are prophets who appeared among peoples other than Banī Isrā'īl. Then comes the period of only five hundred years between the birth of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as the Last Prophet. During this period, the usual chain of prophets remained discontinued. Therefore, this period is known as *Fatrah* or Gap. Before this, a longer period has never remained unvisited by prophets. (Qurṭubī, with some explanation from the author)

There are other reports regarding the period of time between Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليهما السلام, and that which is between Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the Last Prophet, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم. The period of time indicated in these reports is either more, or less, but that does not affect the real purpose.

Imām al-Bukhārī reports on the authority of Sayyidnā Salmān al-Fārisī رضى الله عنه that there was a period of six hundred years between the time of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم. During this entire period, no prophet was sent as confirmed by a *Ḥadīth* in Mishkāt, appearing there with reference to the Ṣaḥīḥs of al-Bukhārī and Muslim, which reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: أَنَا أَوْلَى النَّاسِ بِعِيْسٰى that is, 'Among people, I am the closest to 'Īsā.' He explained the meaning of his remark later in the *Ḥadīth* when he said: لَيْسَ بَيْنَنَا نَبِيٌّ that is, 'No prophet was sent between the two of us.'

As for the three messengers mentioned in Sūrah Yā Sīn (36), they were messengers sent by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who have been called messengers (bearers of a message) in the literal sense.

About the appearance of Khālid ibn Sinān al-'Arabī during this gap as reported by some chroniclers, Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī says with reference to Shihāb that his being a prophet is correct, but the period in which he came was earlier than Sayyidnā 'Īsā, عليه السلام not after him.

Rulings concerning the Gap

Obviously, the verse seems to indicate the fate of the group of people who were not visited by any messenger or prophet or their deputies, nor did they have the religious laws of past prophets preserved with them; such people will be considered excusable and will deserve

no punishment on the condition that such people should have not committed *Shirk*, the grave sin of ascribing partners in the Divinity of Allah. Therefore, Muslim jurists differ about rulings which apply to the people of *Fatrah* (gap), particularly about whether or not they will be forgiven.

The majority tilts towards the hope that they will be forgiven if they had kept adhering to the religion which had survived with them as originating from Sayyidnā Mūsā or Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليهما السلام irrespective of its authenticity - again, subject to the condition that they had not been hostile to the principle of *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah, and had nothing to do with the practice of Shirk. The reason is that the Principle of *Tauḥīd* needs no reported proof. Any human being who ponders over it could himself reason it out.

A Question and its Answer

A question may arise here that the Jews and Christians, the people of the Book, who are being addressed in this verse did have the Torah and the Evangile and their sages and scholars with them even if no messengers reached them during this gap. How then could they come up with the excuse on the Day of Judgement that they had received no guidance? The answer is that by the time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ the original Torah and the Evangile had gone extinct. There were alterations in texts and additions of false narratives. Thus, the availability of non-original scriptures were no better than its extinction. The likelihood of an original manuscript surviving at some unknown place with someone would not be contrary to the assertion made. In fact, some scholars including Ibn Taymiyyah have written that the original copies of the Torah and Evangile were present at some places.

The Unique Perfection of the Last among Prophets ﷺ

When, by addressing the people of the Book in this verse, it was said that 'Our Messenger, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ has come after a long gap,' there emerges a subtle hint towards the need that people who have been honoured with his presence among them should consider this as a matchless blessing and a supreme asset because the line of prophets had remained suspended since a long time and it has been opened for them once again.

Yet another indication given here is towards the fact that the

world has been blessed with his presence in an age and at a place which lacked the light of knowledge and faith. The creation of God had lost its link with God only to be immersed in the worship of self-made idols. In the backdrop of a time such as this, the mission of reviving a people so lost was no easy task. This time was the notorious *Jahiliyyah*, commonly identified as the Age of Ignorance, and the people from it who were entrusted with the Prophet of Islam were spoiled, self-centered and uncompromising. Yet, such was the bliss of his company and so bracing was the light of his mission that this very set of people became, in a very short time, role models and teachers for the whole world in all departments of life - in knowledge, deed, morals, dealings, social living, to name only a few. This, then, becomes a widely witnessed and authentically verified proof that he was a Prophet and Messenger of Allah and that his prophetic teachings were the most effective and the most surpassing among those coming from all past prophets. Imagine the mission of a physician who treats a hopeless patient and does it at a place which lacks medical instruments, and medicines too, yet he succeeds in his effort to treat the patient to the limit that this patient, not simply that he rises from his death-bed to become a healthy person, but that he goes way ahead and himself turns into an expert physician and healer as well - if so, who can doubt the perfection of the master healer!

With this in view, we can see that following the long gap when disbelief in and disobedience to God reigned supreme everywhere, his teaching and training spread out the kind of universal light which remains unparalleled by any age previous to it. In short, out of all miracles, this one miracle alone could compel human beings to have faith in him.

Verses 20 - 26

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ يَٰقَوْمِ اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ
فِيكُمْ أَنبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُم مُّلُوكًا وَآتَاكُم مَّا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِّنَ
الْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾ يَٰقَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِي كَتَبَ اللَّهُ
لَكُمْ وَلَا تَرْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِكُمْ فَتَنقَلِبُوا خَٰسِرِينَ ﴿٢١﴾ قَالُوا

يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّ فِيْهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِيْنَ ۖ وَاِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخْرُجُوْا
مِنْهَا ۚ فَاِنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا فَاِنَّا دٰخِلُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَ رَجُلٰنِ مِنَ
الَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمَا ادْخُلُوْا عَلَيْهِمُ الْبَابَ ۚ فَاِذَا
دَخَلْتُمُوْهُ فَاِنَّكُمْ غٰلِبُوْنَ ۚ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوْٓا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿٢٣﴾ قَالُوْا يٰمُوْسٰٓى اِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَآ اَبَدًا مَّا دَامُوْا فِيْهَا فَاذْهَبْ
اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ
اِلَّا نَفْسِيْ وَاَخِيْ فَافْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ
فَاِنَّهَا مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ اَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً ۚ يَتِيْهُوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ ۗ فَلَا
تَاْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And when Mūsā said to his people, "O my people, remember the blessing of Allah upon you when He made prophets from among you, made you kings and gave you what He did not give to anyone in the worlds. [20]

O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has destined for you, and do not turn back, for then you will turn losers." [21]

They said, "O Mūsā, there is a nation of tyrants over there and we shall never go in there until they get out of it. If they do get out of it, we are ready to go in." [22]

Said two men from among the God-fearing, on whom Allah had bestowed His favour, "Enter the gate (charging) upon them. And once you have entered it, you are the ones to overcome. And in Allah you must place your trust, if you are believers." [23]

They said, "O Mūsā, we shall never enter it, in any case, so long as they are there. So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here." [24]

He said, "O my Lord, I have no control except over myself and my brother. So, make a separation between us and the sinning people." [25]

He (Allah) said, "This (land) is prohibited to them for

forty years. They shall be wandering around the earth. So, do not grieve for the sinning people." [26]

Commentary

Previous to the verses cited above, a pledge was mentioned in which the Banī Isrā'īl were bound to obey Allah and His Messenger. Mentioned along with it was their customary breach of trust, and its punishment. Taken up in the verses appearing above there is a particular event which shows such a breach.

That event goes back to the time when Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the sea and Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his people, the Banī Isrā'īl, once delivered from the slavery of the Pharaoh, became the masters of Egypt. Then, to bless them with His added reward, and to let them repossess their ancestral land of Syria, Allah Ta'ālā commanded them through Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام that they should enter the Holy Land, that is, Syria, with the intention of *Jihād*. And alongwith it, they were given the good news that victory will be all theirs in this *Jihād* - as Allah had made that holy land their destiny and they were bound to have it. But, the Banī Isrā'īl had their peculiar traits of character. They saw the blessings of Allah with their own eyes, they saw the spectacle of the drowning of Pharaoh and the conquest of Egypt, yet they failed, once again, to stand by the solemn pledges they had given and elected to sit out the *Jihād* of Syria squarely against this Divine command. The punishment they received for it was in the form of a forty-year confinement to a limited area where, strangely enough, there were no walls or fences around them, nor were they in chains. Instead, they were free to move in an open area and actually travelled every day, right from the morning through the evening, with the intention of returning to Egypt, their homeland. But, when came the evening, they would find themselves exactly at the spot from where they had started in the morning. During this period, Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn عليهما السلام left this mortal world and these people kept wandering in the wilderness of *Tīh*. It was after that, that Allah Ta'ālā sent other prophets for their guidance.

Thus, after the passage of full forty years, those who survived from among them resolved to take up the *Jihād* of Syria and Baytul-Maqdis under the leadership of the prophet of their time and the promise of

Allah that the Holy Land had been destined for them was thus fulfilled. This is a summary of the event referred to in the verses cited above. Let us now see its details in the words of the Qur'ān.

When Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام received the instruction to call his people to *Jihād* in order to conquer Baytul-Maqdis and Syria, he acted very much in accordance with his prophetic wisdom so crucial in giving good counsel. Therefore, before announcing the Divine command to his people, he reminded them of the many blessings bestowed upon them upto that time. He said:

اذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا وَآتَاكُمْ مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِ أَحَدًا مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ

O my people, remember the blessings of Allah upon you when He made prophets from among you, made you kings and gave you what He did not give to anyone in the worlds.

Recounted here are three blessings. The first of these is a spiritual blessing, that is, many prophets were sent to them continuously, a spiritual honour which can hardly be matched. It has been reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī that no other community has had such a large number of prophets as compared to Banī Isrā'īl.

Ḥadīth authority, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reports on the basis of a narration from A'mash that in only one single period, the last period of the people of Banī Isrā'īl which extends from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام to Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام, one thousand prophets were sent to Banī Isrā'īl. The second blessing mentioned in the verse quoted immediately above is a material blessing, that is, they were made masters and wielders of power. The hint given here is that the people of Banī Isrā'īl who were the oppressed slaves of the Pharaoh and his people for many ages saw how Allah Ta'ālā destroyed their enemies and how they themselves were made masters and kings. Noteworthy here is the statement about prophets where it was said: جَعَلَ فِيكُمْ أَنْبِيَاءَ (He made prophets from among you) which carries the sense that the whole people were not prophets, and this is the truth as prophets are only a few while the large body of people follows them. But, when it comes to the subject of temporal power on countries and states, said there was: وَجَعَلَكُمْ مُلُوكًا (and made you kings) the outward sense of which is that they (all) were

made kings. The Arabic word, '*muluk*' used in the text is the plural of *malik* which means a king in common usage. Obviously, when a whole people cannot be all prophets, no people of a country can be all kings. What happens is that authority in a country rests in the hands of an individual or some individuals while the rest of the people are subordinate to them. But, here the words of the Qur'an are attributing kingship to all of them.

One reason for this is what has been stated by Maulana Ashraf 'Ali Thanavi with reference to some righteous elders in his Tafsir Bayan al-Qur'an, that is, the sovereignty of the 'king' of a country is customarily attributed to his entire people, for example, during the midde centuries of Islam, the government was called as that of Ummaiyyids and 'Abbasids. Similarly, the rule of Ghaznavis and Ghauris, then, that of Mughals, and after that, the rule of the British in India was attributed to all individuals of entire people of that country. Therefore, a whole people having a ruler are known (by proxy) to be rulers of that country.

It was according to this usage that the Qur'an has attributed kingship to the whole people of Bani Isra'il. In this, there may be a hint that an Islamic state is really run by a government of the people. It is the people who have the right to elect their Amir (Imam, leader or ruler) and it is once again, the right of the people who can, by their collective will, remove the holder of that office. Therefore, when seen outwardly, a ruler rules as one individual, but, in reality, that rule is that of the people.

The second reason as reported from some elders by Ibn Kathir, Mazhari and others is that the sense of '*malik*' is more general than that of a king. In common usage, this word is also applied to a person who is well-to-do, has a home, owns property and employs help. In the light of this sense, that was a time when every individual from the Bani Isra'il was like a king of his castle. That explains the attribution of kingship to the entire Bani Isra'il.

The third blessing mentioned in this verse is a combination of both, the spiritual and the material. It was said: وَاٰتٰىكُمْ مَّا لَمْ يُؤْتِ اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ that is, they were given the kind of blessings which were not given to anyone else in all the worlds. Included under these blessings is spiritual

distinction highlighted by the station of prophethood and, along with it, the more obvious temporal power, authority, domain and wealth too. However, a question may arise here regarding the belief that the Muslim *Ummah*, the large body of believers in the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, is the most distinct among all Communities as supported by the textual authority of the Holy Qur'ān, such as: كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ (You are the best *Ummah* raised for mankind - 3:110) and: كَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّسَطًا (And in the same way, We made you a moderate *Ummah* - 2:143) prove it, as do the many narrations from the Prophet's living Traditions. The answer is that the people of the world being mentioned in this verse are the people who were living in the particular period of Banī Isrā'īl which was marked by the presence of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام among them. That was the time when no one in all the worlds was as blessed as were the Banī Isrā'īl. That any other community in times to come could be blessed more than them should not be considered contrary to this.

The saying of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in the first verse (20) was his introductory remark to the Divine command which appears in the following verse (21) in the words: يٰقَوْمِ ادْخُلُوا الْأَرْضَ الْمُقَدَّسَةَ الَّتِيْ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ (O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has destined for you ...).

Which land is the Holy Land?

Apparently, commentators differ about it. Some say that it means Baytus-Maqdis (Jerusalem). Some identify the city of Quds and Eliah as fitting the description of the Holy Land. Still others point out to the city of Arīḥa which was located between the Jordan river and Baytul-Maqdis and was reported to be one of the oldest cities of the world. In fact, it is still there. Unusual statements portraying its grandeur and vastness have been reported historically. Some narrations say that the city was divided over one thousand wards or counties and every such section had some one thousand public gardens each. Then, there are other narrations which indicate that the Holy Land means Damascus and Palestine, or Jordan, according to some others. And Sayyidnā Qatādah has said that the entire land of Syria is the Holy Land. Sayyidnā Ka'b al-Aḥbār has said that he has seen in the Book of Allah (perhaps, the Torah) that the country of Syria is a special treasure of Allah on this entire earth and there are in it Allah's very special and

very dear servants. This land has been called 'holy' because it has been home to the blessed prophets of Allah. According to some narrations, on a day when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام climbed a mountain in Lebanon, Allah Ta'ālā said: O Ibrāhīm, look from here and as far as you will see, that land We have made the Holy Land. All narrations cited here have been taken from Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī and the truth of the matter is that there is not much of a contradiction in these sayings. According to later narrations, the whole country of Syria is the Holy Land - it is just that some narrators have described a certain part of the country of Syria while some others have identified the whole of it.

Looking at verse 22 which begins with the words: قَالُوا يٰمُوسٰى (They said, O Mūsā ...), it will be recalled that, in the verse previous to it (21), Allah Ta'ālā had commanded the Banī Isrā'īl through Sayyidnā Mūsā that they should wage a *Jihād* against the Amalkites and conquer Syria - given along with it was the good news that the land of Syria has been destined for them, therefore, their victory is certain.

The present verse (22) tells us that, despite the Divine command and assurance, the Banī Isrā'īl, because of their well-known contumacy and crookedness, just did not obey that command as well. Instead of doing that, they said: 'O Mūsā, there is a nation of tyrants over there, and we shall never go in there until they get out of it. If they do get out of it, then, we are ready to go in.'

The actual event as reported from the masters of Tafsīr (Exegesis), Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, 'Ikrimah, 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭalḥah and others is that it was a time when the Amalkites ruled Syria and Baytul-Maqdis. They were an offshoot of the people of 'Ād, unusually big in height and size and very ferocious in looks and behavior. They were the people Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and his community were asked to fight against and go on to conquer Baytul-Maqdis.

To carry out the Divine command, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام marched towards Syria in the company of his people, the Banī Isrā'īl. Baytul-Maqdis was their first destination. After crossing the Jordan river, when they reached Arīḥā, the oldest city of the world, they made a stopover. We have already read about the appointment of twelve chiefs to administer the affairs of Banī Isrā'īl in the previous verses of the

Holy Qur'ān. The same chiefs were asked to go on an advance fact-finding mission into enemy territory. Their duty was to gather intelligence on local conditions, the battle front and about the people who control Baytul-Maqdis and against whom they have to wage the *Jihād*. When these chiefs reached Baytul-Maqdis, they were stopped by an Amalkite man right outside the gate of the city. He, all alone, put them under arrest and took them to his king reporting to him that these people had come to fight them. The king went into consultation with his courtiers. Their decision was that all of them should either be killed or punished in some other way. Finally, they agreed upon the proposal that they should be allowed to go free so that they could return to their people and become walking eye witnesses of the great power and grandeur of the Amalkites against which they would never dare to think of marching.

At this point in most books of Tafsīr, reported there are tall tales from Isra'ilite narrations which give the name of the person who accosted these chiefs as 'Awj ibn 'Unuq. His extra-ordinary height and size and his power and strength has been described there with such exaggeration that a sensible person would find it too thick even to just pass it onwards.

Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr has said: Tales reported in such Isrā'īlite narrations can neither be accepted by reason nor do they have any justification in the Sharī'ah. In fact, all this is a bundle of lies and imputations. The truth of the matter is no more than that there are the people called the Amalkites. Since they are the remnants of the people of '*Ād* whose awesome height and size has been mentioned by the Holy Qur'ān itself, so, their huge size and unusual strength were proverbial. One of their men proved strong enough to arrest and take away twelve men from the people of Banī Isrā'īl.

However, freed by the Amalkites, the twelve chiefs of Banī Isrā'il returned to their people at Arīḥa. They told Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام about these unusual people and how unbelievable was their power and grandeur. Whatever they said to him left his heart unmoved because Allah Ta'ālā had already given him the good news of victory over them through revelation.

So, despite having heard about the power of his enemy, he stood

like a rock making preparations for the *Jihād* initiative. But, he had realized the danger that, should the Banī Isrā'īl come to hear about this unusual strength of their adversary, they would cringe and back out. Therefore, he instructed those twelve chiefs not to talk about the Amalkites before their people, in fact, he asked them to keep this as a guarded secret. But, what actually happened was that everyone from among them passed on the information to their respective friends privately. There were only two of them, Yūsha' ibn Nūn and Kālib ibn Yu'qinā, who strictly followed the instructions of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and did not disclose the secret to anyone.

When ten out of the twelve chiefs let the secret out, it was only natural that the secret became public knowledge. Hit by the news of conditions prevailing in the enemy country, they were all upset. Wailing and protesting, they said: It would have been much better if we too had been drowned in the Nile like the people of the Pharaoh! Now those who saved us there have brought us here to be killed at the hands of those tyrants! It was under these conditions that the Banī Isrā'īl said the following words:

يٰمُوسٰٓى اِنَّ فِيْهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِيْنَ وَاِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا

> They said, "O Mūsā, there is a nation of tyrants over there and we shall never go in there until they get out of it. If they do get out of it, we are ready to go in."

It appears in the next verse (23) that two persons, God-fearing and blessed by Allah, hearing the remarks made by the Banī Isrā'īl, gave them some good counsel by saying: Why are you so scared of death much before it has come? Just take a few steps. The gate of the city of Baytul-Maqdis is not far. Take heart and make your move. Only this much of your action, we believe, will become the cause of your victory. Once you enter the gate of Baytul-Maqdis, you will overcome your enemy who would run in defeat. These two persons mentioned in this verse are, according to most commentators, the same two of the twelve chiefs who had faithfully acted upon the advice given by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and had abstained from telling the Banī Isrā'īl everything about the Amalkites - that is, Yūsha' ibn Nūn and Kālib ibn Yu'qinā.

At this place, the Holy Qur'ān has particularly mentioned two attributes of these two elders: (1) : اَلَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ, that is, 'those who fear.' Not said here is as to who it is that they fear. The hint thus given is that there is only one Being in this whole world who deserves to be feared, that is, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* , because He is the Absolute Master of this entire universe. No one can, without His will and permission, bring the least benefit to anyone, nor cause any harm - and when only one Being is deserving of being feared, and that is already determined, then, there remains no need to redetermine it.

The second attribute of these two elders pointed to by the Holy Qur'ān is: (2): أَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمَا, that is, 'Allah had blessed them.' The hint given here is that whoever has any excellence in him anywhere, that is nothing but the blessing and favour of Allah Ta'ālā - otherwise, these twelve chiefs were all blessed with similar outward gifts of hands, feet, eyes and ears with reason and sense on the inside, along with the fortunate company of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. They had all the strengths on their side, yet they all slipped except these two who stood firm on their committment. This tells us that real guidance does not depend upon one's strength of inward and outward faculties or his effort or deed. Instead, it is a reward from Allah Ta'ālā. However, to become deserving of this reward, effort and deed are, no doubt, a condition.

The standard rule of conduct we learn from here is that a person whom Allah Ta'ālā has blessed with reason, intelligence and smartness should not wax proud over these personal strengths while conducting the business of his life.The best course for him is to seek good guidance in all matters of his life from Allah alone.

In short, these two elders advised their people that they should not feel nervous about the apparent power of the Amalkites. If they would place their trust in Allah, just walk upto the gate of Baytul-Maqdis, victory shall be theirs. As for the decisive statement of these elders that once they reach the city gate, they will overcome and the enemy will run away defeated, it could have been based on a close assessment of the Amalkites, that they were, no doubt, unusually huge in built and strength, but were also weak at heart as a result of which, once they hear about the surprise attack, they would be unable to stay there. And it is also possible that their total faith in the Divine decree

which they had heard from Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام as a glad tiding was the basis on which they said so.

But the Banī Isrā'īl who had not listened to their own prophet Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام would have hardly listened to these elders. They gave them the same response, even in a manner which was more uncouth and grotesque. They said: فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here). Had this remark of the Banī Isrā'īl been by way of mockery, it would have been open blasphemy (*Kufr*). After that, the fact of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام living with them and praying for them in the wilderness of Tīh which finds mention in the next verse would have not been possible.

Therefore, the sense of this statement given by leading commentators is: 'You go and fight them. Your Lord will help you. As for us, we cannot help you.' Given this sense, their statement cannot be taken as blasphemy, though the response given by them remains grotesque and hurtful. This is why this statement of the Banī Isrā'īl became proverbial.

Let us recollect a related episode from the early period of Islam. This is the Battle of Badr. An army contingent of a thousand strong youngmen starts marching against Muslims, who are hungry and almost unarmed. Seeing this happen, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم started praying before his Lord. Then, a Ṣaḥābī, Sayyidnā Miqdād ibn al-Aswad رضى الله عنه stepped forward and said: '*Yā Rasūl* Allah , we swear by Allah we shall never say what was said to Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام by his people, that is: فَاذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَا إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here). Instead of that, we shall defend you from your right and left and from the front and rear. Please feel free of any concern and go ahead with your battle plan.'

When he heard this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was very pleased, and his Companions too were fired with a renewed zeal for *Jihād*. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه always used to say: 'I really envy this feat of Miqdād ibn al-Aswad. I wish I too had this good fortune.'

In gist, the people of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, by giving him a flat

response at such a crucial time, broke all pledges they had made.

The Determination of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام against the Treachery of his People

The prayer of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام: قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّىْ لَآ أَمْلِكُ إِلَّا نَفْسِىْ (He said, "O My Lord, I have no control except over myself" should be seen in the perspective of the events in the life of the people of Banī Isrā'īl, the favours of Allah bestowed upon them and the conduct of their prophet, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام in their case. An impartial observer would not fail to notice that the people of Banī Isrā'īl had been suffering from all sorts of pain and disgrace as slaves and serfs of the Pharaohs for centuries. It was the teaching of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, and his *barakah* by virtue of which Allah Ta'ālā blessed them with unprecedented stations. With their own eyes, they saw so many manifestations of the most perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* . The Pharaoh and the people of Pharaoh were defeated on their own grounds, in the Court confrontation summoned by them at the hands of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā Hārūn, peace be upon both of them. The magicians they had trusted were the magicians who placed their trust in Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام and elected to stay by his side. Then, there was the Pharaoh, the one who claimed to be God, and alongwith him, there were so many members of his family who lived in luxury in the royal palace. And then, their eyes saw how the great subduing power of Allah, the Mighty, the Exalted, made all of them vacate all palaces and mansions they lived in and leave behind all they once owned, all simultaneously, in a single sweep of time. And how He drowned the Pharaoh in the sea with Banī Isrā'īl looking on the spectacle and how did He make the miracle of Banī Isrā'īl themselves cross the river. And finally, how was the wealth, over which the Pharaoh waxed proud by saying: أَلَيْسَ لِىْ مُلْكُ مِصْرَ وَ هٰذِهِ الْأَنْهٰرُ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِىْ (Is it not that this land of Egypt is for me and these are rivers which flow from beneath me?) given out by Allah Ta'ālā, the entire country and the entire wealth, without any fighting or killing, to the Banī Isrā'īl !

These were great happenings. These people were direct witnesses to the manifestations of Allah's supreme power to subdue. No less was the good done to them by Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام who first delivered them from heedlessness and ignorance and then freed them from the

slavery of the Pharaoh facing unbearable hardships in that process. After all that, when these very people were commanded to mount a *Jihād* on Syria, of course with assurances of Divine help and promises of rewards, they betrayed their mean nature and said: اِذْهَبْ اَنْتَ وَرَبُّكَ فَقَاتِلَآ اِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (So go, you and your Lord, and fight. As for us, we are sitting right here). Let the greatest possible reformer in the world stop for a while, cross his hand over his heart and think what effect such low attitudes demonstrated by the people he was working for would have produced on him. But, here we are talking about a highly determined *Rasūl* of Allah who stands there as an immovable model of steadfastness, despite all odds, and pursuing his goal relentlessly.

Now that he was made helpless by repeated breaches of trust committed by his people, he turns to his Lord and to Him he says only this much: اِنِّیْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ اِلَّا نَفْسِیْ وَاَخِیْ (I have no control except over myself and my brother). And the problem was how could he now carry out the *Jihād* expedition against the Amalkites? Also worth noticing is the fact that there were at least two chiefs of the Banī Isrā'īl, Yūshā' ibn Nūn and Kālib ibn Yu'qinā, who had proved themselves to have been faithful followers of Sayyidnā Mūsā علیه السلام and had made consistent efforts with him to give good counsel to their people and bring them to the right path. Still at this time, he made no mention of them as well. He simply talked about himself and his brother, Sayyidnā Hārūn علیه السلام. It had no other cause but the same treachery and disobedience of the people of Banī Isrā'īl. Sayyidnā Hārūn علیه السلام, being a prophet was the only one Divinely protected there. That he would stand firm by the truth in word and deed was certain. As for the two chiefs, they were not so protected and infallible. So, being in pain and anger, he mentioned only those he was certain would stand firm on truth - 'I have no control except over myself and my brother.'

The prayer that Sayyidnā Mūsā علیه السلام made after that was: فَافْرُقْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (So, make a separation between us and the sinning people). The substance of this prayer, according to an explanation given by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه, was that 'the punishment these people deserved should be given to them; and whatever we are found to be deserving of should be awarded to us.'

The manner in which Allah Ta'ālā answered this prayer was: فَاِنَّهَا

مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً، يَتِيْهُوْنَ فِى الْأَرْضِ (This [land] is prohibited to them for forty years. They shall be wandering around the earth). It means that the land of Syria was forbidden for them for forty years. They shall not go there, even if they wanted to. And not simply that they would be unable to go to the land of Syria, they would also be unable to return back to their homeland of Egypt, if they thought of going there. Instead of that, they shall be detained in this wilderness.

For punishments that come from Allah Almighty who needs the police and their handcuffs or the high and strong walls and iron-gates of prisons? When He intends to detain anyone, He needs none of these formal arrangements. He can put one under arrest even on grounds open from all sides. The reason is obvious. The whole universe is at His command. It was created by Him and from Him it takes its orders. When the universe is served with Divine orders to put someone under arrest, the air and the atmosphere and the earth and the space become the jailor for the condemned.

So, this open land area located between Egypt and Baytul-Maqdis is comparatively small. Its measurement, according to the Tafsīr of Sayyidnā Muqātil رحمه الله, is thirty *Farsakh* in length and nine *Farsakh* in width. If one *Farsakh* is taken to be equal to three miles, it comes to be a total area of ninty miles in length and twenty seven miles in width. And according to some narrations, the whole area is thirty by eighteen miles. Thus, Allah Ta'ālā detained a whole people whose total number, according to the statement of Sayyidnā Muqātil رحمه الله, was six hundred thousand, restricting them within this small open ground in a manner that they kept struggling for full forty years to somehow get out of this open land area and return back to Egypt, or go forward and reach Baytul-Maqdis. But, what actually happened was that by the time came evening after a whole day's journey, they discovered that they have been as if moving in a circle having returned to the same spot from where they had started in the morning.

Authentic scholars of Tafsīr say that the punishment Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* gives to a people is in proportion to their evil deed. Since these disobedient people had uttered the words: إِنَّا هٰهُنَا قٰعِدُوْنَ (we are sitting right here), Allah Ta'ālā had them detained right there for forty years in punishment. Historical accounts in this matter differ. Some

say that during these forty years, the present generation which had disobeyed was totally destroyed. Their next generation survived and it was this generation which, after having been delivered from this forty-year detention, entered Baytul-Maqdis; or, there were some people from the earlier generation who were still surviving. However, there was that promise of the Holy Qur'an: كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ (that is, Allah has destined the Holy Land of Syria for the Bani Isra'il). That promise had to be fulfilled, that the Bani Isra'il should take it over and rule the land. But, the people of Bani Isra'il present during that time elected to ignore this Divine award for which they were duly punished: مُحَرَّمَةٌ عَلَيْهِمْ أَرْبَعِيْنَ سَنَةً that is, they were deprived of victory over the Holy Land for forty years. Then, it was at the hands of their next generation, that this country was conquered, and the promise of Allah Ta'ala stood fulfilled.

In this wilderness of Tih, Sayyidna Musa and Harun عليهما السلام were with their people for whom this wilderness was nothing but detention and punishment, while, for these two blessed souls, it was the fountain head of Divine blessings. This is why this period of forty years during which the Bani Isra'il were condemned was still full of many silver linings. Such was the *barakah* of the presence of Sayyidna Musa and Harun عليهما السلام among them, that Allah Ta'ala showered on them blessings of many kinds. When they became helpless against the scorching sun over their heads in an open field, Allah Ta'ala, answering the prayer of Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام, stretched out a canopy of clouds over their heads. Wherever they went, these clouds would follow them with their shade. When they complained of thirst and the shortage of water, Allah Ta'ala gave Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام a special stone which went with him wherever he went, and when they needed water, Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام would strike it with his staff and twelve streams would gush forth from it. When they were hit by hunger, the heavenly food of *Mann* and *Salva* was sent to them. And when they complained about the darkness during nights, Allah Ta'ala provided for them a tower of light under the light of which they did what they had to do.

To sum up, this wilderness of Tih was not full of condemned people only. In fact, there were two dear prophets of Allah Ta'ala and with them two favoured elders, Yusha' ibn Nun and Kalib ibn Yu'qina, as

well. It was for their sake that, even during this period of detention and punishment, blessings kept coming to them. And since Allah Ta'ālā is the Most Merciful of all those merciful, it is possible that these once disobedient people from the Banī Isrā'īl, after having witnessed the happenings around them, may have repented from their sins and may be it was in return for their act of repentance that they were being blessed with these rewards.

According to authentic narrations, it was during this period of forty years that Sayyidnā Hārūn عليه السلام died. Then, after a year or six month, came the death of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام. After them, Allah Ta'ālā appointed the revered elder, Yūshā' ibn Nūn as a prophet and gave him the mission of guiding the Banī Isrā'īl. When the period of forty years of detention was over, the remaining people of Banī Isrā'īl got together under the leadership of Sayyidnā Yūshā' ibn Nūn and marched towards Baytul-Maqdis on this mission of *Jihād*. True to the promise of Allah Ta'ālā, they conquered Syria and the wealth of the land they inherited was unimaginable.

That it has been said: فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ (so do not grieve for the sinning people) at the end of verse 26 has a basis, for the blessed prophets, may peace be upon them all, are endowed with a natural disposition which makes it impossible for them to bear by the pain and hardship of their people. Even if they are punished, the prophets too are affected emotionally. Therefore, Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام has been comforted here that he should not grieve over the punishment given to those people.

Verses 27 - 32

وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَاَ ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ ۘ اِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ
اَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْاٰخَرِ ؕ قَالَ لَاَقْتُلَنَّكَ ؕ قَالَ اِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ
اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ لَئِنْۢ بَسَطْتَّ اِلَيَّ يَدَكَ لِتَقْتُلَنِيْ مَاۤ اَنَا
بِبَاسِطٍ يَّدِيَ اِلَيْكَ لِاَقْتُلَكَ ۚ اِنِّيْۤ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ
﴿٢٨﴾ اِنِّيْۤ اُرِيْدُ اَنْ تَبُوْٓاَ بِاِثْمِيْ وَاِثْمِكَ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ

النَّارِ ۚ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَطَوَّعَتْ لَهٗ نَفْسُهٗ قَتْلَ
اَخِيْهِ فَقَتَلَهٗ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَبَعَثَ اللّٰهُ غُرَابًا
يَّبْحَثُ فِي الْاَرْضِ لِيُرِيَهٗ كَيْفَ يُوَارِيْ سَوْءَةَ اَخِيْهِ ؕ قَالَ
يٰوَيْلَتٰٓى اَعَجَزْتُ اَنْ اَكُوْنَ مِثْلَ هٰذَا الْغُرَابِ فَاُوَارِيَ سَوْءَةَ
اَخِيْ ۚ فَاَصْبَحَ مِنَ النّٰدِمِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ مِنْ اَجْلِ ذٰلِكَ ۛ كَتَبْنَا عَلٰى
بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ قَتَلَ نَفْسًا ۢبِغَيْرِ نَفْسٍ اَوْ فَسَادٍ فِي
الْاَرْضِ فَكَاَنَّمَا قَتَلَ النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَمَنْ اَحْيَاهَا فَكَاَنَّمَآ اَحْيَا
النَّاسَ جَمِيْعًا ؕ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ ز ثُمَّ اِنَّ كَثِيْرًا
مِّنْهُمْ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ فِي الْاَرْضِ لَمُسْرِفُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And recite to them the story of the two sons of Ādam truthfully. When they both offered a sacrifice, then it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other. He said, "I will kill you." He said, "Allah accepts only from the God-fearing. [27] **If you stretch your hand towards me to kill me, I am not going to stretch my hand towards you to kill you. Of course, I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds.** [28] **I would rather have you earn my sin and your sin and then become one of the people of the Fire. And that is the punishment of the unjust."** [29]

His self, however, prompted him to kill his brother, so he killed him and became one of the losers. [30] **Then, Allah sent a crow who was scratching the earth to show him how he should hide the corpse of his brother. He said, "Alas! Was I not even able to be like this crow so that I could hide the corpse of my brother? So, he stood regretful.** [31]

For this reason, We prescribed for the children of Isrā'īl that whoever kills a person not (to retaliate) for a person killed nor (to punish) for spreading disorder in the earth, is as if he has killed the whole mankind, and whoever saves the life of a person is as if he has saved the life of the whole mankind. And certainly, Our mes-

sengers have come to them with clear signs. Then, after all that, many of them are there to commit excesses on the earth. [32]

Commentary

The Story of Hābīl (Abel) and Qābīl (Cain)

In these verses, Allah Ta'ālā has instructed the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should relate the story of the two sons of Ādam truthfully to the people of the Book, or to the whole *Ummah*.

People who are blessed with insight into the Holy Qur'ān know that it is no book of folklore, fiction or history where the purpose is to relate an event from the beginning to the end. But, events of the past and accounts of earlier peoples carry many lessons and wise counsels within their fold. That is the real essence of history. Then, in them, there are such conditions and circumstances as form the basis of different religious injunctions. In view of these very beneficial considerations, the Qur'ān employs a methodology of its own throughout the text. It would, when the occasion warrants, narrate an event. Most often, it would not narrate the whole event in one sequence and at one place. In fact, preference is given to narrating a particular segment from it which bears some element of purpose and is relevant at the given place.

This story of the two sons of Ādam عليه السلام is being narrated here in the same style. It has many lessons and good counsels for the present and future generations; and under them, mention has been made of many religious injunctions.

We shall proceed by explaining the words used in the text of the Qur'ān following which you will have an idea of the main story, and after that we shall be talking about injunctions and rulings contained therein.

In the previous verses, mentioned there was the command of *Jihād* given to the Banī Isrā'īl and how cowardly and evasive they turned out to be in response. Set in contrast, the present story condemns unjust killing and the destruction it brings in its wake. The purpose is to bring the people to adhere to moderation and balance in this matter, for the way it is an error to cringe and back out from fighting and kill-

ing to uphold the truth and put an end to falsehood, similarly, starting to kill and fight unjustly amounts to a stock destruction of one's material and spiritual life both in the present world and in the Hereafter.

As for the expression: إِبْنَيْ اٰدَمَ (ibnaiy Ādama : the two sons of Ādam) appearing in the first verse (27), it can be said that, for that matter, every human being, man and woman, is from the progeny of Ādam and everyone can be identified as being from among the children of Ādam. But, according to the judgement of the majority of authentic scholars of Tafsīr, the expression: إِبْنَيْ اٰدَمَ at this place means the two real sons of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, that is, Hābīl and Qābīl. It was to relate their story that it was said: وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ اٰدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ (and recite to them the story of the two sons of Ādam truthfully).

While Reporting Historical Accounts, Caution and Truth are Mandatory

Here, by adding the word: بِالْحَقِّ (bil-ḥaqq : truthfully), stress has been placed on an important principle to be observed while reporting historical narratives. Great caution is mandatory in this matter. These narratives should have nothing false in them, nothing contrary to the truth, nothing dubious or deceptive, nor should there be any change, increase or decrease, of any kind, in the narration of the original event. (Ibn Kathīr)

This is not the only place where the Holy Qur'ān has identified this principle. There are other places too where similar instructions appear that it be observed. In Sūrah 'Āl 'Imrān, it was said: إِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ الْقَصَصُ الْحَقُّ (This is indeed the true narration - 3:62). In Sūrah Al-Kahf, it was said: نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ نَبَأَهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ (We narrate to you their story with truth - 18:13). And in Sūrah Maryam, it was said: ذٰلِكَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ (That was 'Isā son of Maryam - a Word of Truth ... -19:34). At all these places, by including the key word of *Al-Ḥaqq* or The Truth with historical narrations, the importance of observing truth in reporting events has been made mandatory. The large number of disorders in this world generated through reporting of events usually issue forth from lack of caution in handling it as it should be handled. A little change of word or mode could distort the reality of the event. The religious codes and laws of past communities were lost through this trap door of negligence and lack of caution leaving their religious books to become collections of stories devoid of

reliable authority. So, by adding a single word: بِالْحَقِّ (truthfully) at this place in the verse, a clear signal was given towards this important objective.

In addition to what has been said above, through this very word, the addressees of the Holy Qur'ān are also being chastened and guided to the fact that their noble prophet, on him be the peace and blessing of Allah, who is a total *Ummiyy* (untaught by any human being), yet he is describing the events which took place thousands of years ago, absolutely true and correct. When so, how else could it be explained but that it was Divinely revealed to a Divinely ordained prophet?

After this introduction, the event relating to these two sons of Adam عليه السلام was put in the following words by the Holy Qur'ān: إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقُبِّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ that is, both of them offered their sacrifices for Allah Ta'ālā, but it was accepted from one of them and was not accepted from the other.

The word: قربان (*Qurbān*), in terms of Arabic lexical usage, refers to whatever is made the medium of nearness to someone; and in Islamic legal terminology, it means the *Dhabīḥah* or sacrifice which is offered to seek nearness to Allah Ta'ālā.

The event of offering this sacrifice which has been reported on the basis of sound and strong chains of authorities and which has been declared by Commentator Ibn Kathīr as the unanimously agreed upon position of all earlier and later 'Ulamā is given below.

When Sayyidnā Ādam and Ḥawwā' عليهما السلام came to live in the world and started having children, it so happened that they had twins from every pregnancy, one of the two being a boy, while the other, a girl. That was a time when, among the children of Ādam عليه السلام, there was no one other than brothers and sisters - and brothers and sisters cannot be married to one another. So, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū*, in terms of the need of the time, had promulgated a special provision in the religious law given to Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام that, as for a boy and girl born out of one pregnancy, they shall be regarded as real brothers and sisters among themselves and marriage between them shall be considered forbidden. But, for a boy born in the second pregnancy, a girl born in the first one shall not be legally taken as a real sister and marriage between them would be permissible.

But, what happened was that the girl born with the first boy, Qābīl, was beautiful while the girl born with the second boy, Hābīl, was ugly. When came the time of marriage, the ugly girl born with Hābīl fell to the lot of Qābīl according to rules. This enraged Qābīl. He turned hostile to Hābīl and started insisting that the girl born with him should be the one given in marriage to him. Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, in view of the legal rule of procedure, did not accept the demand. However, to remove the division between Hābīl and Qābīl, he proposed that they should both offer their respective sacrifice for Allah. Whoever has his sacrifice accepted will be the one to have that girl. The reason is that Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام was certain that the sacrifice to be accepted will be the sacrifice of the one who has the right to marry her, that is, the sacrifice of Hābīl.

In those days, an open sign of a sacrifice being accepted was that a fire would come from the sky and eat up the sacrifice; and the sacrifice which was not eaten up by the fire was the sign of its remaining unacceptable.

Now, the situation was that Hābīl was the owner of a flock of sheep and goats. He offered the sacrifice of a good spring lamb. Qābīl was a farmer. He offered some grains as his sacrifice. As customary with them, a fire did come from the sky and ate up the sacrifice offered by Hābīl - and the sacrifice offered by Qābīl remained lying where it was, untouched. Thereupon, hit by failure and disgrace, Qābīl was further enraged. Unable to restrain it, he told his brother openly: لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ (I will kill you).

Hābīl did not respond to his angry remark with counter anger on the spot. He rather said something which was peaceful and principled. It even had an element of sympathetic concern for him: إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ (Allah accepts only from the God-fearing) that is, if you had been God-fearing, practicing *Taqwā* and piety, your sacrifice too would have been accepted. Since you did not do so, the sacrifice was not accepted. Why blame me for it?

Also mentioned within this statement is the cure for the envy (*ḥasad*) of the envier (*ḥāsid*), that is, when the envier sees that Allah Ta'ālā has given someone a particular blessing which has not been given to him, then, he should take his deprivation as a result of his own

practical shortcomings and sins and think of repenting from them and correcting his or her behaviour - not that one starts wishing and worrying about ways through which the other person could be made to lose the blessing he has - because this would not bring him any gain, in fact, it will become the cause of some loss to him, for acceptibility with Allah depends on *Taqwā* (fear of Allah). (Maẓharī)

Acceptibility of Deeds Depends on *Ikhlāṣ* (Sincerity) and *Taqwā* (Fear of Allah)

There appears in this dialogue between Hābīl and Qābīl a sentence which has the status of an important principle: The acceptibility of one's deeds and acts of worship depends on *Taqwā*. The deed of a person who has no *Taqwā* in him is not accepted. For this reason, the learned among the righteous elders (*salaf*) have said that this verse is a shot in the arms of those who are devoted to acts of worship and do deeds in the hope of finding the pleasure of Allah. And this was the reason why Sayyidnā 'Āmir ibn 'Abdullāh was crying at the time of his death. People around him asked: 'As for you, you have been busy doing your '*Ibādāt* (acts of worship) and good deeds throughout your life, why, then, would you weep?' He said, 'You are saying this and ringing in my ears is this saying of Allah Ta'ālā: إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللّٰهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ (Allah accepts only from the God-fearing). I just do not know if any '*Ibādah* of mine will be accepted, or not.'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه said: 'If I become certain that Allah Ta'ālā has accepted some deed of mine, then, I would not surrender this blessing even if the whole world were to turn into solid gold and pass into my possession, in fact, I would take it to be nothing as compared to that blessing.'

Similarly, said Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā' رضى الله عنه: 'If it stands settled that one *Ṣalāh* of mine has found acceptance with Allah Ta'ālā, then, that is far more than a whole world-full of blessings for me.'

Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, may Allah be pleased with him, gave the following good counsel to a person in a letter he wrote to him.

> "I tell you to hold on to *Taqwā* without which no deed is accepted; and mercy is not shown to anyone except those who observe *Taqwā*; and without it there is no Divine reward on anything. There are many who preach it but there are very few who practice it."

And Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'Even the smallest deed done with Taqwā is not small. And how a deed which has been accepted can be called small? (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 33 - 34

إِنَّمَا جَزٰٓؤُا الَّذِيْنَ يُحَارِبُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْاَرْضِ
فَسَادًا اَنْ يُّقَتَّلُوْٓا اَوْ يُصَلَّبُوْٓا اَوْ تُقَطَّعَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ
خِلَافٍ اَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ ۭ ذٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ
فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ
تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ ۚ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

Those who fight against Allah and His Messenger and run about trying to spread disorder in the earth, their punishment is nothing but that they shall be killed off or be crucified or their hands and legs be cut apart from different sides or they be kept away from the land (they live in). That is a humiliation for them in this world, and for them in the Hereafter there is a great punishment; [33] **except those who repent before you overpower them. Then, be sure that Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [34]

Commentary

Qur'ānic Laws are Unique and Revolutionary

Mentioned in the previous verses (27-32) was the event of the killing of Hābīl (Abel) and its gravity as a crime. In the verses cited above, and in verses which follow, there is a description of the legal punishments for killing, plundering, robbery and theft. Prompted in between the description of the punishments for robbery and theft is the need to fear Allah and the desirability of seeking nearness to Him through acts of obedience. This approach of the Qur'ān, acting in a very subtle manner, prepares the human mind to accept the desired revolutionary change in thinking. The reason is that the Holy Qur'ān, unlike the penal codes of the world, does not stop at a simple codification of crime and punishment. Instead of doing that, it combines with each crime and its punishment the ultimate fear of Allah and the Hereafter making the later almost present before him whereby it would turn the human orientation towards a state of being the very thought of which

leaves a person all cleansed from every defect and sin. An impartial view of things as they are around us will prove that, without the motivating factors of the fear of Allah and the apprehension of the Hereafter, no law or police or army of this world can guarantee that crimes can be eradicated from human societies. It is this wise and affectionate approach of the Holy Qur'ān which ushered a revolution in the world when it created a society of human beings who, in their Godliness, were ahead of even angels.

The Three Kinds of Islamic Legal Punishments

Before we proceed with the details of the Islamic legal punishments for robbery and theft mentioned in the verses cited above and present our explanations of the particular verses, it seems appropriate to clarify the Islamic legal terminology concerning these punishments - a lack of familiarity with which causes even educated people to fall in doubts. Under all common laws of the world, punishments for crimes are considered penalties in an absolute sense, irrespective of the crime concerned. Law books like the Indian Penal Code, Pakistan Penal Code and some others in other countries are comprised of all sorts of crimes and their punishments. But, in the Shari'ah of Islam, things work differently. Here, the punishments of crimes have been divided into three kinds. These are: Ḥudūd (Islamic legal punishment delimited as Divine Statute; plural of Ḥadd), Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) and Ta'zīrāt (Penalties; plural of Ta'zīr). Before we move on to define these three kinds and explain their sense, it will be useful to bear two things in mind.

Firstly, it is necessary to know that crimes which bring harm or loss to a human being inflict injustice not only on the created but also cause disobedience to the Creator. Therefore, in every crime of this nature, the Right of Allah (*Ḥaqqullāh*) and the Right of the Servant of Allah (*Ḥaqqul-'Abd*) are intermingled, and one becomes guilty of both crimes. But, in some crimes, the status of the Right of the Servant of Allah is more important while, in some others, the status of the Right of Allah is more prominent. As for the modus operandi in religious injunctions, it rests on this status of predominance.

Secondly, it is also necessary to know that the Sharī'ah of Islam has not determined any yardstick for crimes other than those which

are special. Instead, it has left it to the discretion of the Qāḍī (the Judge of an Islamic Court) who could award and enforce the kind and amount of punishment deemed necessary to plug out the incidence of crime keeping in view the objective conditions prevailing in whatever time, place and circumstance it may be. It is also possible that the Islamic state of any time and any place may, with due consideration of Islamic legal percepts, restrict the rights of the Qāḍīs in some manner and make them abide by a particular measure of punishment for crimes - as has been the practice in the later centuries of Islam, and as it nearly is the prevailing practice in most countries.

Let us now understand that crimes for which the Qur'ān and Sunnah have not fixed any punishment, instead, have left it to the discretion of the relevant authorities, are the kind of punishments which are called "Ta'zīrāt"(penalties) in the terminology of the Sharī'ah of Islam. As for the punishments of crimes already fixed by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, they are divided over two kinds. Firstly, those in which the Right of Allah has been declared to be predominant and the punishment for which is known as "Ḥadd," the plural of which is "Ḥudūd." Secondly, those in which the Right of the Servant of Allah has been accepted as predominant in accordance with the Sharī'ah of Islam and the punishment for which is called the "Qiṣāṣ" (Even Retaliation). As for the description of Ḥudūd and Qiṣāṣ, the Holy Qur'ān has itself explained it in full details. The details of the remaining penal offences have been left to the judgement of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and to the discretion of the relevant ruling authority of the time.

In short, we can say that the punishment of crimes which the Holy Qur'ān has promulgated after having determined it to be the Right of Allah is called the "Ḥudūd," and that which it has ordained as the Right of the Servant of Allah is known as "Qiṣāṣ," and crimes the punishment of which has not been determined by it are called, "Ta'zīr." The injunctions of these three kinds differ in many respects. Those who take the punishment of every crime as "Ta'zīr" on the basis of their own customary usage - and do not keep the difference of Islamic legal terminology in sight - make frequent errors of judgement in understanding Islamic legal injunctions.

As for the punishment of penal offences (Ta'zīr), they can be made

the lightest, the heaviest, or could even be pardoned, all depending on attending circumstances. Here, the powers and options of the relevant authorities are wide. But, when it comes to Ḥudūd, no Amir or government or ruler or head of state is permitted to make the least change, alteration, reduction or increase in it. Neither does a change in time and place affect it in any manner nor does the Amir or chief executive of the government have the right to waive or pardon it.

There are only five "Ḥudūd" in the Sharī'ah of Islam. These are the punishments for (1) Robbery, (2) Theft, (3) Adultery, (4) False Accusation of Adultery. These punishments have been mentioned in the Holy Qur'ān clearly and categorically (*Manṣūṣ*). The fifth Ḥadd is that of drinking wine which stands proved on the basis of a consensus (Ijmā') of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Thus, the punishments of a total of five crimes stand fixed here. These are called the "Ḥudūd." The way no Amīr or ruler can reduce or pardon these punishments, very similarly, even an act of repentance cannot bring about an amnesty for the criminal as far as the punishment due in this mortal world is concerned. Of course, the sin bound to bring punishment in the Hereafter does get to be forgiven through sincere repentance leaving at least that account in the clear. Out of these, there is only one punishment, that of robbery, in which there is an exception, that is, if the robber repents before being arrested and his conduct in dealings proves his repentance to be satisfactory, only then, this "Ḥadd" will stand dropped. Repentance after arrest is not valid with regard to the worldly punishment. Other than this, the remaining Ḥudūd do not get to be forgiven in this world even by repentance - whether this repentance comes before the arrest or after it. In matters relating to penal offences (Ta'zīrāt) recommendations could be heard as warranted by a relevant right. In the Ḥudūd of Allah (punishment under Divine right) even the making of a recommendation is not permissible, and equally impermissible is its hearing too. The Holy Prophet ﷺ has prohibited it strictly. The punishments under Ḥudūd are generally strict. The law of their enforcement is also strict as nobody has been permitted to make any additions or substractions in them under any circumstances, nor can they be waived or forgiven by anyone. Along with this strict stance maintained in punishment and law, when it comes to some moderation of matters, equally stringent conditions have been imposed

regarding the completion of the crime as well as the completion of the proof of the crime. Should even a single condition out of these be found missing, the Ḥadd stands dropped. In fact, even the least doubt found in the proof will cause the Ḥadd to be dropped. In this matter, the established law of Islam is: اَلْحُدُوْدُ تَنْدَرِءُ بِالشُّبُهَاتِ that is, Ḥudūd are dropped in case of doubt.

At this point, let us also understand that in cases where the Islamic legal punishment (Ḥadd) is dropped because of a doubt or absence of some condition, it is not necessary that the criminal would go scot-free only to become more daring in later crimes. Instead of that, the relevant ruler would award the penal punishment to him as due in his case. The penal punishments (Ta'zīrāt) of the Sharī'ah are generally physical which, being lesson-oriented, have a complete system of blocking and eradicating crimes. Suppose, only three witnesses were found to attest to the proof of adultery (Zinā), and the witnesses are upright and trustworthy about whom the doubt that they would lie cannot be entertained. But, according to the Islamic legal norm, the Islamic legal punishment will not be enforced against the offender because of the absence of the fourth witness. However, it does not mean that the offender will be allowed to walk out free of any obligation, lesson or penalty. The ruler of the time would, rather, award an appropriate penal punishment to him which would be in the form of lashes. Or, take the example of the punishment for theft. If there remains any shortfall or doubt in conditions fixed as the required proof of theft, the Islamic legal Ḥadd punishment of cutting hands cannot be enforced on the accused. This does not mean that the accused goes all untouched and free. On the contrary, other penal punishments will be given to him as warranted in his case.

The Punishment of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation)

Like Ḥudūd, the punishment of Qiṣāṣ has also been fixed in the Qur'ān, that is, life be taken for life and wounds be retaliated by even wounds. But, the difference is that Ḥudūd have been enforced as the Right of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*). It means that should the holder of the right elect to forgive the offence, it will not be forgiven, and the Ḥadd will not be dropped. For example, should the person whose property has been stolen were to forgive the thief, the Islamic prescribed pun-

ishment for theft will not stand forgiven on that count. This is contrary to the case of Qiṣāṣ where the Qur'ān and Sunnah have declared the status of the Right of the Servant of Allah (*Ḥaqqul-'Abd*) as predominant. This is why the accused killer, after the crime of killing has been proved legally, is handed over to the guardian (*Walī*) of the person killed who can, at his discretion, take Qiṣāṣ and have him killed, or forgive him, if he so wishes. Similar to this is the case of Qiṣāṣ in cases of wounds.

You already know that Ḥudūd and Qiṣāṣ when dropped do not let the criminal go unscathed, the ruler of the time having the power and discretion to award the amount and kind of penal punishment (Ta'zīr) considered appropriate. Therefore, it should not be doubted that, in the event the criminal charged with homicide were to be set free after having been forgiven by the guardian of the person killed, killers would be encouraged and cases of homicide would become common. This doubt is unfounded because taking the life of the person who had killed was the right of the guardian of the person who was killed - and he surrendered it by forgiving. But, providing the security of life for other people is the right of the government. It can, to protect this right, sentence the killer for life or give him some other punishments in order to offset the danger posed by such a person to the lives of other people.

The Explanation of Āyāt and Details of Ḥudūd

Upto this point, we have dealt with necessary information about the terminology of Islamic Legal Punishments of Ḥudūd, Qiṣāṣ and Ta'zīrāt. We can now move to the explanation of verses which carry injunctions about them and which would also include a detailed discussion of Ḥudūd. The first verse (33) begins by stating the punishment of those who fight against Allah and His Messenger and go about spreading disorder in the earth. For the sake of clarity, let us consider two things at this stage.

1. What does 'fighting' (*Muḥārabah*) against Allah and His Messenger and spreading disorder in the earth mean, and to whom does this apply? The word, *Muḥārabah* is derived from *Ḥarb* and intrinsically means to wrest or snatch away. In Arabic usage, it is used against *Salm* which means peace and security. Thus, we can see that the

sense of Ḥarb (fight) is the spreading of disorder. It is obvious that rare incidents of theft or killing and plundering do not cause public peace to be disturbed. In fact, this happens only when a powerful and organized group stands up to carry out acts of robbery, killing and plundering. Therefore, according to Muslim jurists, the punishment contemplated in this verse is meant for a group or an individual who robs people and breaks the law of the land by the force of arms. This will not include those who indulge in common individual crimes such as thieves and pick-pockets. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

2. The second point worth noticing in this verse is that 'Muharabah' (fighting) of the criminals is said to be against Allah and His Messenger, though the confrontation or fighting waged by robbers and rebels is apparently against human beings. The reason is that a powerful group when it elects to break the Law given by Allah and His blessed Messenger with force, it is really at war with the government, even though they are obviously carrying out their aggression against common human beings. But, when the government itself is Islamic, a government which subscribes to and enforces the Law of Allah and His Messenger, this act of 'fighting' (Muḥārabah) will invariably be regarded as being 'against' Allah and His Messenger.

In short, the punishment mentioned in the first verse (33) applies to robbers and rebels who ruin public peace by attacking with armed group force and break the law of the land openly. As obvious, this could appear in many forms. So, everything from aggression against property and honour to killing and bloodshed is included within its sense. It is from here that we find out the difference between *Muqātalah* and *Muḥārabah*. *Muqātalah* refers to a bloody fight, though with actual killing or without, and though property is also looted as an adjunct. The word, *Muhārabah* is used in the sense of spreading disorder by employing force and causing the destruction of public peace and safety. Therefore, this word is particularly used to denote high-handed and group-led intrusion into anything relating to the life, property and honour of people which is called highway looting, robbery and rebellion.

The punishment for this crime has been fixed by the Holy Qur'ān itself when it enforced it as the Right of Allah which, in a manner of

saying, was a crime against the ultimate authority. In the terminology of the Sharī'ah, it is called the Ḥadd. Let us now find out the Islamic prescribed punishment for dacoity and highway robbery. In the present verse (33), four punishments for highway robbery have been mentioned: اَنْ يُّقَتَّلُوْٓا اَوْ يُصَلَّبُوْٓا اَوْ تُقَطَّعَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ اَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْاَرْضِ : That they shall be killed off or be crucified or their hands and legs be cut apart from different sides or they be kept away from the land (they live in).

In the first three punishments, the words used belong to a particular from of verb called "Bāb al-Taf'īl" which are emphatic and denote repetition and intensity of the respective acts. The added use of the plural form gives the hint that their being killed or crucified or amputated is not like common punishments where punishment is given only to one individual who has provenly committed a crime. The situation here is rather different when the whole group of robbers will be awarded the punishment by being killed or crucified or amputated, even though the actual crime was committed only by one single individual of the group. Another hint given here indicates that this killing, crucification and amputation is not in the form of Qiṣāṣ which could stand pardoned after having been forgiven by the guardians of the person killed. Instead, this Islamic Legal Punishment (Ḥadd) has been enforced as the Right of Allah (Ḥaqqullāh) and the punishment will not be pardoned legally even if the people who have suffered were to forego and forgive. These two rulings were arrived at by the text's choice of the particular grammatical form (*Bābut-Taf'īl*) of the first three words of the verse. (Tafsīr Mazharī and others)

These four punishments for highway robbery have been introduced by using the word: اَوْ : '*Aw*,' which is also employed to give choice in a few things and for a division in allotment of jobs too. Therefore, a group of Ṣaḥābah, Tābi'īn and jurists of the Muslim Ummah, by taking the word, '*Aw*,' in the sense of choice, has taken the position that the Imām or Amīr or the ruler has been legally given the choice to award all four punishments, or any one of them as suitable in their cases, of course, after an assessment of the power and terror of the robbers and the gravity or negligibility of their crimes. This is the view held by Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn al-Musaiyyib, Sayyidnā 'Aṭā', Dāwūd, Ḥasan al-Basrī, Ḍaḥḥāk, Nakh'ii and Mujāhid as well as that of Imām Mālik

from among the Four Imāms. On the other hand, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, Imām Shāfi'ī, Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and a group of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn have taken the word, '*Aw*' in the sense of division of work. Thus, according to them, the sense of the verse is that there are different punishments which can be applied to various conditions of highway robbers and highway robberies. This position is also supported by a *ḥadīth* where, based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had entered into a peace treaty with Abū Burdah Aslami. He broke the treaty when he robbed some people going to Madīnah to embrace Islam. Pursuant to this episode, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl came with an injunction for punishment. The injunction stipulated that whoever killed, and looted property as well, should be crucified; and whoever killed, but did not loot, should be killed; and whoever looted, but did not kill anyone, should have his hands and legs cut apart from different sides; and whoever from them embraces Islam should have his crime pardoned; and whoever did not kill or plunder but restricted himself to scaring people, which caused a breach of public peace, should be exiled. If these people have killed a Muslim or non-Muslim citizen of Dār al-Islām - but, did not loot property - their punishment is : أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا that is, all of them should be killed, even though the act of killing was directly carried out by some of them only. And if they killed and looted both, their punishment is : يُصَلَّبُوا that is, they should be crucified. The form it should take is that they be hanged alive, then their stomach be slit with a spear or something else. And if they have participated in looting only and have not killed anyone, their punishment is : أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِّنْ خِلَافٍ that is, their right hands be cut apart from the wrists and their left legs from the ankles. Here too, though this act of looting may have been performed directly only by some of them, yet the punishment will remain just the same for all of them, because whatever the doers of the act did, they did it with their trust in the cooperation and assistance of their accomplices, therefore, all of them are partners in the crime. And if they had yet to commit the crime of killing or plundering while they were arrested beforehand, their punishment is : أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ that is, they be kept away from the land they live in.

The sense of 'keeping away' or turning out from the land, according to a group of Muslim jurists, is that they should be turned out from

Dār al-Islām. Some others say that they should be turned out from the place where they have committed the crime of robbery. In cases like this, Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq رضى الله عنه gave the verdict that should the criminal be turned out from one place and left to roam free in other cities, he was bound to harass the people there. Therefore, let a criminal like this be locked in a prison. This will become his 'keeping away' or turning out from the land for he cannot go and walk anywhere. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has adopted this very view.

As for the question that armed attacks of this kind these days are no more restricted to looting of property or killing and bloodshed alone for there are frequent instances of raping and kidnapping women as well. So, if the statement of the Qur'ān : وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا (and run about trying to spread disorder in the earth) were to be taken as inclusive of such crimes, what punishment would they deserve? Here, apparently the Imām or Amīr or the ruler will have the option of enforcing whichever of the four punishments he deems fit in their case; and in the event that he does find the necessary proof of adultery as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam, he would enforce the Ḥadd punishment for *Zinā* (adultery) as well.

Similarly, if the position is that no one was killed, no property was looted, but, some people did receive wounds at their hands, then, they would be subjected to the law of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) against the inflicting of wounds. (Tafsīr Maẓharī)

Towards the end of the verse (33), it was said: ذٰلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْىٌ فِى الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ فِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيْمٌ that is, the Islamic Legal Punishment to which they have been subjected here is humiliation for them in this world and certainly a token of punishment. As for the punishment of the *Ākhirah*, that is much harsher and more lasting. This tells us that the punishments of Ḥudūd, Qiṣāṣ or Ta'zīrāt in this mortal world do not lead on to the forgiveness of punishments due in the Ākhirah unless the person sentenced repents and makes a genuine *Taubah*, following which he could hope to have the punishment of *Ākhirah* forgiven.

In the second verse (34) : اِلَّا الَّذِيْنَ تَابُوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ تَقْدِرُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ (... except those who repent before you overpower them), an exception has been mentioned. The exception is that should the robbers and rebels were to repent - before they are surrounded and overpowered by government

forces, and are in a state when their position of strength is still operative - and decide on their own to abandon their practice of highway robbery, then, this Prescribed Punishment will stand dropped in their case. This exception is different from the general Law of Ḥudūd because in other crimes such as theft and adultery, if the criminal, after he has committed the crime and has been indicted by a Qāḍī court as guilty, were to prove that he had repented genuinely, then, though the punishment of the Hereafter (Ākhirah) would stand forgiven by virtue of this repentance, yet the Islamic Preseribed Punishment (حد شرعی) will not be forgiven in this mortal world - as it will be explained later, after some verses, under the punishment for theft.

The wisdom behind this exception is that, on the one hand, such severity has been maintained in the punishment of robbers that for the commitment of the crime - even if by one person out of a whole group - punishment is given to the whole group. Therefore, on the other hand, things have been made softer and lighter through this exception, that is, let them repent if they would, in which case, the punishment of the mortal world would also be forgiven. In addition to that, there is a strategic advantage here in this provision, that is, it is not always easy to control or overpower a powerful group, therefore, the door of pursuasion has been left open for them so that they are induced to repent.

Yet another expedient consideration in this matter is that killing a person is an extreme punishment. Here, the drift of the Islamic Law is that it should happen as rarely as possible while, in a case of robbery, the killing of a whole group becomes necessary, therefore, the effort to reform them too, through pursuasion, was continued simultaneously. The kind of effect it produced was that 'Alī Asadī who robbed passersby on the outskirts of Madīnah with the help of his group happened to hear one of those days the following verse of the Holy Qur'ān being recited by a Qārī in the caravan (under attack) : يٰعِبَادِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْرَفُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوْا مِنْ رَّحْمَةِ اللّٰهِ (O My servants who have committed excesses against their own selves, do not lose hope in the mercy of Allah - Zumar, 39-53). When he looked for the Qārī and found him, he asked him to recite the verse once again. When he had heard the verse the second time, he put his sword back into the sheath, repented from robbery

and reached Madīnah. At that time, Marwān ibn al-Ḥakam was the chief executive of Madīnah. The well-known Ṣahābī, Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ held 'Alī Asadī by the hand and took him to the Amīr of Madīnah. Before him, he recited this verse of the Qur'ān and said: You cannot give him any punishment.

The government was already helpless against their robbery and the disorder generated by it. Everyone was pleased with the outcome.

An event similar to this happened when Ḥāritha ibn Badr rebelled, left the city and took to the practice of killing and plundering. But, Almighty Allah gave him the Taufīq (ability) later on when he repented and returned to Madīnah. Then, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ did not subject him to the ordained legal punishment (حد شرعی).

At this point, it is worth remembering that the waiver in the Islamic Legal Punishment (حد شرعی) does not make it necessary that the Rights of the Servants of Allah the criminal has trampled upon will also be forgiven. On the contrary, the fact of the matter is that anything valuable taken from anyone, which is still available, must be returned back. And if someone was killed or wounded, one is duty-bound to go through the consequences as stipulated under the Law of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation). However, since Qiṣāṣ is the Right of the Servant of Allah, it could be forgiven if forgiven by the guardians of the person killed or by the person who holds that Right. Other than that, if someone has hurt someone else financially, it is necessary to vacate the liability (Ḍamān), or have it forgiven by the person concerned. This is the favoured position of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and that of the majority of the jurists of Islam. A little reflection would show that this is a fairly obvious matter as the act of seeking deliverance from any infringement of the Rights of the Servants of Allah is a part of the act of *Taubah* (repentance) itself. *Taubah* without it remains just incomplete. Therefore, a robber or dacoit will be taken as genuinely repentant only when he pays for whatever Rights of the Servants of Allah he has infringed upon, or has it forgiven by them.

Verses 35 - 40

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَابْتَغُوْٓا اِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيْلَةَ وَ

جَاهِدُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَوْ
اَنَّ لَهُمْ مَّا فِى الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا وَّمِثْلَهٗ مَعَهٗ لِيَفْتَدُوْا بِهٖ مِنْ
عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ مَا تُقُبِّلَ مِنْهُمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾
يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّخْرُجُوْا مِنَ النَّارِ وَمَا هُمْ بِخٰرِجِيْنَ مِنْهَا ز وَلَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ مُّقِيْمٌ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَالسَّارِقُ وَ السَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوْآ اَيْدِيَهُمَا
جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَمَنْ
تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٣٩﴾ اَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ يُعَذِّبُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

O those who believe, fear Allah and seek the *wasīlah* of nearness to Him, and carry out Jihād in His way so that you may succeed. [35] **Surely, those who disbelieve are such that if they have all that there is in the earth, and more as much besides it, to pay it as ransom against the punishment of the Doomsday, it shall not be accepted from them. And for them there is a painful punishment.** [36] **They will wish to come out of the Fire, but they are not to come out from there. And for them there is a lasting punishment.** [37]

As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both to recompense them for what they earned, a deterrent from Allah. And Allah is Mighty, Wise. [38] **And whoever repents after his transgression and corrects himself, then Allah shall relent towards him. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.** [39]

Do you not know that to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whomsoever He wills and forgives whomsoever He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything. [40]

Commentary

In verses previous to those cited above, the Islamic Prescribed Punishment of robbery and rebellion, as well as the details of injunctions relating to them, were mentioned while the Prescribed Punishment for theft is coming up after three verses later. The three verses which appear in between talk about Taqwā (the fear of Allah), obedience to and the worship of Allah, inducement to Jihād (fighting or struggling in the way of Allah) as well as the ruinous effects of disbelief, rejection, obstinacy and disobedience. A deeper look into this particular style of the Qur'ān would reveal that its oft-recurring approach is not simply to state the letter of the law of penalty and punishment as some cold and coercive command from the law giver and just leave it at that, instead, by taking the approach of an affectionate nourisher and nurturer, it also smooths out the edges of the human mind to prepare it for its ultimate abstention from crimes. And when it awakens the human minds to the awaiting realities of the fear of Allah and the Ākhirah (Hereafter) and when it makes the everlasting blessing and bliss of Paradise appear almost in sight, it goes on to change hearts replacing their chronic taste for crime with instant distaste. This is the reason why words similar to: اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (fear Allah) are repeated after stated laws of crime and punishment. Here too, three things have been commanded:

1. The first one is : اِتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ that is, 'fear Allah', for it is the fear of Allah alone which can really stop human beings from committing crimes openly and secretly.

2. The second one is : وَابْتَغُوٓا اِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيْلَةَ that is, 'seek the nearness of Allah.' The word, "وسيلہ" : *wasīlah*, left untranslated, is a derivation from the verbal noun, '*waslun*', which means to make effort to become close to someone. This word, whether spelt with the letter, *sīn* (وسيلہ : سين, or *ṣād* (وصيلہ : صاد), is used almost in the same sense. The only difference is that *waṣlun* spelt with the letter, *Ṣād* (صاد) refers to becoming close in the absolute sense, while, *waslun* spelt with the letter, *sīn*, is used to denote seeking to gain nearness with longing and love. Related details appear in the Ṣiḥāh of Jauharī and in the Mufradāt of Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī. So, *wuṣlah* (وصلہ) or *waṣīlah* (وصيلہ) spelt with the letter, *Ṣād*, refer to something which brings about nearness or conjunction be-

tween two things, whether that nearness comes to be through longing and love, or in some other form. As for the word, *wasīlah* (وسيلہ) spelt with the letter, *sīn*, it means that which brings someone closer to someone else through liking and love. (Lisān al-'Arab, Mufradāt al-Qur'ān)

The act of seeking to gain access to Allah - that is,'*wasīlah*' to Allah, to be precise - is anything which brings a servant of Allah nearer to his or her sole object of worship with all longing and love. Therefore, the righteous elders, the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn have explained the word, 'wasīlah', to mean obedience, nearness, faith and righteous conduct. Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah, as reported by Ḥākim, said : '*Wasīlah*' means nearness and obedience, and Ibn Jarīr has reported the same on the authority of 'Aṭā', Mujāhid and Ḥasan al-Baṣri, may the mercy of Allah be upon them all.

Also, Ibn Jarīr and others have reported from Qatādah a Tafsīr of this verse which is : تَقَرَّبُوْا اِلَيْهِ بِطَاعَتِهٖ وَالْعَمَلِ بِمَا يُرْضِيْهِ . It means : Seek nearness to Him by obedience to Him and by doing deeds which please Him. Therefore, the gist of the explanation of this verse is that one should seek the nearness of Allah through *'Īmān* (faith) and *'A'māl* (good deeds).

Appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, there is a sound (Ṣaḥīḥ) *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: '*Wasīlah*' is a high rank of Paradise, above which there is no rank. You pray to Almighty Allah that He gives me that rank.

Again, in a narration from Saḥīḥ Muslim, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: When the Mu'adhdhin (مؤذن : Muezzin) calls the Adhān, you keep saying what he says. Then, recite Durūd on me and pray that I be blessed with '*Wasīlah*.'

These *aḥādīth* tell us that '*Wasīlah*' is a special rank of *Jannah* (Paradise) which is identified particularly with the Holy Prophet ﷺ. As for the command to seek and find '*Wasīlah*'given to every believer, it seems to be, on the surface, contrary to this particularity. But, the answer is fairly clear that the way the highest station of guidance is special to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who always prayed for it, but, its elementary and intermediary ranks of guidance are common and open to all Muslims - similarly, the high rank of '*Wasīlah*' is particular

to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and all ranks after it are open and common to all believers through the linkage of their love for him.

In his Letters, the famous renovator of the second millennium of Islam in India, Mujaddid Alf-Thānī, and Qāḍī Thanā'ullāh of Pānīpat, in his Tafsīr Mazharī, have both warned that the sense of longing and love embedded in the word, '*Wasīlah*', clearly shows that advancement in the ranks of '*Wasīlah*' depends on the love for Almighty Allah and His Messenger - and love comes through the following of Sunnah, the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is because Almighty Allah says: فَاتَّبِعُوْنِىْ يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ (Say [O Prophet], "If you do love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you ..."- 3:31). Therefore, the more particular one is in following the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ in acts of worship, transactions, dealings, morals, social living, practically in all departments of life, the more beloved of Allah one shall be, and the more widening becomes the gyre of this love, the closer and nearer to Allah one shall be.

Now, after this lexical explanation of the word, '*Wasīlah*,' and the exegetical notes from the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn, we do know how everything which becomes the means of achieving the pleasure and nearness of Allah is, for a human being, the '*Wasīlah*' of becoming close to Allah. As included in it are faith (*'Īmān*) and good deeds (*al-a'māl al-sālih*), so included therein are the company and the love of prophets and righteous people as well, for that too is one of the causes of the pleasure of Allah - and so, praying to Allah Almighty by making them a *Wasīlah*' should be correct, as was done by Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه when he, at the time of a famine, making Sayyidnā 'Abbās a '*Wasīlah*,' made a prayer for rains before Almighty Allah. The prayer was answered.

It is reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had himself taught a blind Saḥābī to pray with the words which are as follows : اَللّٰهُمَّ اِنِّىْ اَسْاَلُكَ وَاَتَوَجَّهُ اِلَيْكَ بِنَبِيِّكَ مُحَمَّدٍ نَبِيِّ الرَّحْمَةِ (O Allah, I seek from You, and I ask for Your attention with (the *Wasīlah* of) Your Prophet, Muḥammad, the Prophet of Mercy. (Manār)

3. Before taking up the third command, that of Jihād, in this verse (35), it will be useful to recollect the first command, that of Taqwā, then the command to seek nearness to Allah through faith and good

deeds, and now in the end it was said: وَجَاهِدُوْا فِىْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (and carry out Jihād in His way). Though Jihād was included under 'good deeds' yet it was to spell out the higher status of Jihād among 'good deeds' that Jihād was mentioned separately and distinctly - as confirmed by a saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which is : ذِرْوَةُ سَنَامِهِ الْجِهَادُ that is, Jihād is the highest peak of Islam. Moreover, there is yet another element of wisdom why Jihād has been mentioned distinctly at this place. It will be recalled that the unlawfulness of spreading disorder on the earth, alongwith its worldly and other-wordly punishment, was mentioned in previous verses (32, 33). Since Jihād too, given a surface view of it (or, as those allergic to it would love to believe), appears to be some form of disorder on the earth (*al-fasād fī al-arḍ*), therefore, it was possible that someone ignorant could just fail to understand the difference between Jihād (fighting in the way of Allah) and *Fasād* (spreading disorder). To offset this possibility, the spreading of disorder on the earth was forbidden first and it was after that that the command of Jihād was mentioned distinctly and the difference between the two was pointed out by the addition of the words : فِىْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (in His way). This is because the killing and plundering of the property of people in robberies and rebellions is for the sole purpose of personal aggrandizement and other nefarious objectives while, should it ever come to happen in a Jihād, it will still be for the initial purpose of upraising the Word of Allah and eliminating oppression and tyranny. There is a world of difference between the two.

Moving on to the second (36) and the third (37) verses, one notices the manner in which the grave curse of Kufr (disbelief), Shirk (the associating of partners in the Divinity of Allah) and sin has been pointed out. It is so poignant that even a little reflection on it could bring an instant revolution in the lives of men and women of such persuasion compelling them to abandon all Kufr and Shirk and sin. To explain the curse of sinful living a little further, it can be said that sins in which one gets involved usually is because of personal desires and needs or for the desires and needs of family and children. Since their fulfillment comes through an increase in wealth and property, one goes after amassing wealth and property without making any distinction between what is Ḥalāl (lawful) and what is Ḥarām (unlawful) in it. In these verses, Almighty Allah has censured the acquisition mania

of such people which will prove to be futile in the ultimate analysis because its cure lies in realizing that things of comfort collected to satisfy a short lived span of life by working hard day and night still remain unattained. More and more stays to be the order of every other day in life. What begins must end and this race of gold and greed will also end when the punishment of the Doomsday will appear in sight and, at that time, if these people were to offer all they had collected in the mortal world, wealth and property, things and things of comfort, taste and value, offer all of it in return for their release from the punishment, then, this would not be possible anymore. Even if the wager is increased higher, suppose everything of value were to be owned by one person, nay, let us say twice as much, and if he were to offer all of it to have his release from the punishment, still then, nothing would be accepted from him and he will not have his deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter. That this punishment would be everlasting for disbelievers has been made clear through the third verse (37).

The fourth verse (38) reverts to the subject of the punishment of crimes where the Islamic Legal Punishment of theft has been described. The punishment for theft belongs to the category of Ḥudūd which is one of the three kinds of Islamic Legal Punishments discussed earlier (under the Tafsīr of verses 33 and 34). Since the Holy Qur'ān has itself fixed this punishment, it has not been left at the discretion of the relevant authorities. The Holy Qur'ān has determined it as the Right of Allah (*Ḥaqqullāh*), therefore, it is called the *Ḥadd* of *Sariqah* (The Islamic Legal Punishment of Theft). The words of the verse are:

وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوٓا اَيْدِيَهُمَا جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ

As for a man or woman who commits theft, cut off the hands of both to recompense them for what they earned, a deterrent from Allah. And Allah is Mighty, Wise.

Noteworthy here is the fact that the address in Qur'ānic injunctions is generally to men wherein women are also understood as included consequentially. In *Salāh*, *Sawm*, *Ḥajj*, *Zakāh* and in all injunctions of the Sharī'ah, this is the general operating principle of

Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, in the case of the punishment for theft and adultery, the text here does not limit itself to addressing men only, instead of which it addresses its command to both sexes mentioning them separately.

One reason for doing so is that this is a matter of Ḥudūd in which the least doubt could cause it to be dropped. Therefore, women were not left as implied under the address. They were, rather, mentioned explicitly.

Understanding the Islamic Law of *Sariqah* (Theft)

Something else we should find out at this stage is the very sense of the word, 'Sariqah' and its definition as determined in the Sharī'ah of Islam. According to Al-Qāmūs, the Arabic Lexicon, if anyone takes what belongs to someone else, from a secured place, without his or her permission, clandestinely, it is called "Sariqah." And this is its Islamic legal definition too. So, in the light of this definition, in order that Sariqah be proved, a few ingredients must exist:

1. **BEING PRIVATELY- OWNED :** The property concerned must have been owned privately by an individual or group. The stealer should own nothing in it, nor should there be any doubt of such ownership, nor should there be things in it in which the rights of common people are equal, such as, institutions of public welfare and their belongings. This tells us that should someone take something in which he or she has ownership rights, or there is a doubt of such ownership, or in which the rights of common people are equal, then, the Ḥadd of Sariqah, the Islamic Prescribed Punishment, will not be enforced against the stealer. However, the relevant authority of the time could enforce punitive punishment (Ta'zīr) at his discretion.

2. **BEING SECURED :** It means that the stolen property must be secured as in a locked house or under a security guard. Property not in a secured place, if picked up by someone, would also not render that person liable to be charged with the Ḥadd of Sariqah. However, should there be even a doubt in the property concerned being secure, even then, the Ḥadd of Sariqah will stand dropped. Considerations of sin and punitive punishment (Ta'zīr) are a separate matter.

3. **BEING WITHOUT PERMISSION :** If a person, who has been

given the permission to take or pick up and use the property concerned, chooses to take it away for good, the Ḥadd of Sariqah will not be imposed. And should there be even a doubt about the stealer having such permission, the Ḥadd will stand dropped.

4. TAKING CLANDESTINELY : This is because the looting of someone's property openly is no theft. It is robbery, the punishment for which has already been stated. The point is if it is not by stealth, the Ḥadd of Sariqah will not be imposed on the person concerned.

After having heard the details involved in all these conditions, you would have already realized that theft as known to us carries a general and wide sense. Every single person who indulges in it is not legally liable to the Ḥadd of Sariqah, that is, the punishment of cutting hands. Instead of that, this Prescribed Punishment shall be enforced against that particular form of theft in which all these ingredients have been found present.

Along with it, you also know that situations in which the Ḥadd for theft is dropped, it is not at all necessary that the criminal would go scot-free. In fact, the relevant authority of the time could award punitive punishment against him at his discretion, which could even be physical, as that of lashes.

In the same way, let it not be surmised that, in situations where the absence of some condition of Sariqah restrains the enforcement of the Ḥadd Punishment, the act itself would become legally permissible and lawful - because, as explained earlier, we are not talking about sin and the punishment of the Hereafter here. The concern here is that of the temporal punishment, and that too of a particular kind of punishment. Otherwise, the property of a person taken without his pleasure and permission, no matter how, shall remain Ḥarām (unlawful), causing punishment in the Hereafter - as clarified in the verse : لَا تَأْكُلُوْٓا اَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ (And do not eat up each other's property by false means - 2:188).

Also worth noting here is the fact that the words used by the Qur'ān in the matter of theft are the same as those used about the punishment of adultery. But, the difference is that, in the matter of theft, the mention of man appears first and that of woman follows,

while, in the case of adultery, the arrangement has been reversed where woman has been mentioned first. Thus, in the punishment of theft, it was said: وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ (a man or a woman who commits theft - 5:38) while, in the punishment of adultery, it was said: اَلزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي (the woman and the man guilty of fornication - 24:2). Commentators have indicated many elements of wisdom in this reversal of word order, but the one that appeals most is that the crime of theft when committed by man as compared to that committed by a woman is more grave because Almighty Allah has blessed him with the kind of strength to earn his living which a woman does not have. Should a man who, despite that so many doors of earning his living are open to him, stoop so low as to commit the disgraceful crime of theft, really increases the gravity of his sin. And when it comes to the matter of adultery, Allah Almighty has blessed a woman with natural modesty and secured atmosphere which leaves no reason for her to fall into the lower levels of immodesty which would be a grave crime indeed. Therefore, in theft, the mention of man precedes while, in adultery, that of woman.

After stating the Ḥadd Punishment for theft in this verse (38), two sentences have been added. The first sentence is: جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَسَبَا : (to recompense them for the evil deed they committed and the second sentence is: نَكَالًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ (a deterrent from Allah). The later is composed of the words, '*Nakāl*' (a deterrent) and '*min Allah*' (from Allah). Lexically, the Arabic word, '*Nakāl*' means a punishment which is exemplary, something which teaches a lesson to others as well so that they too abandon any intentions of committing crimes. Therefore, a translation of this word in the idiom of any other language would have to have a sense of lesson and dissuasion both. The hint given here is that the stern punishment of cutting hands is based on a consideration which is special and wise. In simple words, it amounts to punishing one and chastening the rest so that this ugly crime is eradicated totally. Then, by adding '*min Allah*' (from Allah), a pointed reference has been made to yet another subject of importance, that is, there are two ways of looking at the crime of theft. Firstly, a person may take the property belonging to someone else without any right to do so which inflicts injustice on the later. Secondly, this person acted counter to the command of Allah. Keeping the first aspect in sight, this punishment is the right of the victim of injustice which requires that the punishment,

if pardoned by the holder of the right, will stand forgiven - and this is the customary practice in all cases of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation). Now looking at it from the second aspect, this punishment is for having acted contrary to the command of Allah. It requires that this punishment will not be forgiven even if it were to be forgiven by the person who has been the victim of the theft - unless, of course, forgiven by Almighty Allah Himself. This is called Ḥadd or Ḥudūd in the terminology of the Sharī'ah of Islam. So, by determining the second aspect through the addition of *'min Allah'* (from Allah), the hint given is that this punishment is Ḥadd - not Qiṣāṣ, that is, in a manner of saying, the punishment has been awarded for what constitutes a Crime against the State! Therefore, even if the person who is the victim of the theft were to forgive, the punishment would still not be dropped.

Finally, towards the end of the verse (38), by saying: وَاللّٰهُ عَزِيْزٌ حَكِيْمٌ (And Allah is Mighty, Wise), answer has been given to the doubt so widely entertained these days, that is, this punishment is very harsh. Not resting at that, there are the loudmouthed and the uninformed among them who would not even fight shy of saying that this punishment is savage. Refuge with Allah! These words are there to point out that the introduction of this severe punishment is not only that it is an outcome of Allah's being Mighty and Powerful, but that it also based on His being Wise as well. The Islamic Legal Punishments which the modern highbrows of the West label as harsh and savage shall be taken up in details with comments on the wisdom behind them, their need and benefits, soon after we have completed the explanation of the present set of verses.

The next verse (39) says:

فَمَنْ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ ظُلْمِهٖ وَاَصْلَحَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ يَتُوْبُ عَلَيْهِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ

And whoever repents after his transgression and corrects himself, then Allah shall relent towards him. Surely, Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.

It will be recalled that forgiveness was also mentioned in connection with the Prescribed Punishment for robbery appearing a few verses earlier (34) - and forgiveness has been mentioned after the punishment

for theft as well. But, the statement of forgiveness at both places has a particular difference and it is on the basis of this difference that the sense of forgiveness in both punishments has been taken differently by Muslim jurists. While ordaining the punishment for robbery, giving an exception, Almighty Allah has said: إِلَّا الَّذِينَ تَابُوا مِن قَبْلِ أَن تَقْدِرُوا عَلَيْهِمْ (except those who repent before you overpower them - 5:34) the outcome of which is that the Ḥadd Punishment for robbery mentioned in the verse provides an exemption whereby the one who repents - before robbers are overpowered and arrested by the government - shall have his Ḥadd Punishment forgiven. As for the forgiveness mentioned after the punishment for theft, it does not have the exemption from this temporal punishment. It is rather in terms of the Hereafter that this repentance shall be accepted towards which a clear indication exists in the words: فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ يَتُوبُ عَلَيْهِ (then Allah shall relent towards him). In other words, the relevant ruler of the time will not abandon the Ḥadd Punishment because of this repentance, instead of that, Almighty Allah will, by forgiving their crime, grant deliverance to them from the punishment of the Hereafter. Therefore, Muslim jurists almost unanimously agree that the Ḥadd Punishment for robbery shall not be enforced on robbers who repent before they are arrested. But, should a thief were to forsake and repent from stealing after having committed a theft - whether before or after arrest - then, the Ḥadd of Sariqah, the Islamic Legal Punishment, which is a temporal punishment, will not be forgiven. That the sin is forgiven and deliverance from the punishment of the Hereafter has been achieved is not contrary to this.

The later verse (40) says:

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ يُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ وَيَغْفِرُ لِمَن
يَشَاءُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Do you know that to Allah alone belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whomsoever He wills and He forgives whomsoever He wills. And Allah is powerful over everything.

This verse is linked with and homogeneous to previous verses which feature stringent injunctions of the Islamic Legal Punishments for robbery and theft. A shallow look at these injunctions could give the false

impression of their being contradictory to human dignity. It is to remove this doubt that Almighty Allah has, in this verse, initially stated that He alone is the real Master of all the universe. Then, He says that He alone is the Absolute Power. In between, comes the statement that it is not only that He punishes. He forgives as well, and that forgiveness and punishment depend on His Wisdom, for the way He is the Absolute Master and the Absolute Power, so is He Absolutely Wise too. There is no human power which can guage the extents of His mastery and domain so shall there be no human reason which can fully fathom the countless manifestations of His Wisdom - and that which it would pass on to human beings by virtue of pondering through principles is sufficient enough to put their hearts at peace.

What is Benign and What is Savage?

People in the West and those influenced by their education and culture commonly object that Islamic punishments are harsh. And as pointed out a little earlier, there are some heedless people who do not even hesitate to say that these punishments are savage and undignified.

Before we deal with this matter, it would be useful to keep what has been stated earlier in sight. We know that the Holy Qur'ān has itself determined and fixed the punishments for only four crimes which are called Ḥadd, in the terminology of the Islamic Sharī'ah. The punishment of robbery is the cutting of the right hand and the left foot; the punishment of theft is the cutting of the right hand from the wrist; the punishment of adultery is one hundred lashes in some situations, and stoning to death in some others; the punishment of making a false accusation of adultery is eighty lashes. The fifth Islamic Prescribed Punishment (Ḥadd) is that of drinking which is eighty lashes as fixed under the consensus of the Ṣaḥābah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. With the sole exception of these five crimes, the punishment of all other crimes has been left to the discretion of the ruler of the time so that the relevant judge may award the kind and amount of punishment with due consideration of the crime, the criminal and the circumstances. This is a matter in which it is also possible that some particular system designed to delimit and apportion punishments is established in consultation with those fit to guide and advise, and Qāḍīs or judges are

bound with it. This is what happens these days when penal laws are generally enacted through legislative assemblies, and Qāḍīs or judges award punishments within limits already identified. Although, in the five crimes the punishment for which has been fixed by the Qur'ān, or through a consensus (*Ijmā'*), and in which no individual or party or assembly has any right of alteration or substitution, but, in them too, if the proof of the crime is not available through the Law of Evidence prescribed by the Sharī'ah, or there be the proof of the crime but conditions under which this punishment is enforced may not be complete, and the fact of the crime stands proved in the sight of the Qāḍī or judge, still then, in that situation too, the Ḥadd Punishment (حد شرعی) will not be enforced, instead of which, the punishment given will be punitive (Ta'zīrī). Along with it, there is the standing rule of Islamic Law that the benefit of doubt goes to the person accused of a crime. A doubt about anything in the proof of the crime or the conditions of the crime causes the Ḥadd Pubnishment to be dropped. But, in the event that there be the necessary proof of crime available, the punishment given will be punitive (Ta'zīrī).

This tells us that there will be many more situations in which the Ḥadd Punishment will not be enforced and, in their place, punitive punishments will be awarded subject to the discretion of the ruler of the time. Since punitive punishments have not been predetermined by the Sharī'ah, they can be changed or tailored to suit the needs of every time and every circumstance just like the general laws of the land. Therefore, at least, in this field, nobody has room for any objection. Now the 'debate' is reduced to the punishments of five crimes only, and that too, in their particular situations. For example, let us take theft and see that the punishment of cutting the hand has not been imposed by the Sharī'ah on every theft, in an absolute sense - that is, theft as we know it in our common usage. This is no Sariqah. Sariqah, the crime which is punished by cutting the hand, has a peculiar definition of its own, details about which have appeared earlier (under the subheading: 'Understanding the Islamic Legal Punishment of Sariqah') and which can be briefly defined here as the taking out of someone's property from a secured place, by breaking the security arrangements, unlawfully and secretly. According to this definition, many forms recognized as common thefts stand eliminated from the standard defini-

tion of the Ḥadd of Sariqah. For instance, the condition of a secured place tells us that property stolen from commonly used public places such as Masjid, maṣallā of *'Īd* (area earmarked for the large congregational prayers on the occasion of 'Idul-Fiṭr and 'Idul-Aḍḥā), Park, Club, Railroad Station, Waiting Room, Train, Airplane etc., or stealing fruits hanging on trees, or stealing honey will not cause the Ḥadd of Sariqah to be imposed against the thief, instead of that, punitive punishment will be given to the culprit as generally done in most countries. Similarly, take the example of a person you have allowed to enter your house - whether he is your servant or maid or a worker on wages or a builder on contract or a friend or relative - now should he take something away from your house, then, though he is included under the definition of common theft and is deserving of the punitive punishment for it, yet, the Islamic Legal Punishment of cutting the hand will not be enforced on him - because he entered the house with your permission and the arrangement of legal security is not complete as far as he is concerned.

Similarly, incidents like someone picked someone else's pocket, or snatched away cash or jewellery from someone's hand, or extracted something by fraud, or went back on his word when asked to return what he had agreed to keep in trust are all unlawful and impermissible, and definitely included under customary thefts, but, the punishment for all these is punitive which depends upon the discretion of the ruler. Since these are not included under the definition of legally culpable 'Sariqah,' no amputation of hand will take place.

Likewise, the hand of a stealer of coffin clothes will not be cut because, first of all, it is in no secure place, then the shroud itself is not in the 'ownership' of the deceased, though this act of the stealer is gravely unlawful. For this, he will have his punitive punishment at the discretion of the ruler. In the same manner, if someone commits a theft in what was jointly owned property in which the stealer too had some share - whether it was a joint property from inheritance or from commercial partnership - it is a situation in which, since some part of the ownership of the stealer is also included therein, the doubt about such ownership will cause the Islamic Legal Punishment (Ḥadd) to be dropped and punitive punishment will be given.

As for all these conditions, they relate to the actual completion of the crime, a brief outline of which you have seen above. Now what comes next is the completion of the proof. In this matter of enforcing Ḥudūd, the Sharī'ah has also made its Law of Evidence unmistakeable by keeping it very distinct and cautious as compared to what concerns other common matters. In the punishment of adultery, imposed there is the condition of four witnesses in place of two - and that too, while they give such eye witness as would not leave any word doubtful therein. Though, in the case of theft, only two witnesses are sufficient, yet, even for these two, some additional conditions, other than those commonly required in witnessing, have been imposed. For example, there are other matters in which, if needed, the Qāḍī or judge has the option to accept the witness of a sinning person if he is satisfied that the person, despite his being a sinner practically, does not lie. But, in the case of Ḥudūd, the Qāḍī or judge does not have the right to accept his witness. Common matters can be judicated based on the evidence given by one man and two women. But, in Ḥudūd, the evidence of two men is necessary. In common cases, the Sharī'ah does not consider Tamādī (being time-barred) as valid excuse - a witness given by someone can be accepted irrespective of the time lag since the event occured. But, in Ḥudūd, if a testimony is not given immediately, instead of that, was given after one month or was delayed more than that, then, it will not be acceptable.

This brief outline of the conditions of the enforcement of the Ḥadd of Sariqah appearing above has been taken from the highly authoritative book of the Hanafī Fiqh, Badā'i' al-Ṣanā'i'.

The outcome of all these conditions is that the Ḥadd of Sharī'ah, the Islamic Prescribed Punishment, will be enforced only in a situation when it is strictly in accordance with the rules of procedure determined by the inviolable Sharī'ah of Islam that the crime, as well as, its proof are found conclusively complete - and so complete too as would leave no aspect of it doubtful. This tells us that the Sharī'ah has done two things simultaneouly - it has, on the one hand, fixed the punishment of these crimes, as required in its wisdom, being strict as they are; but, on the other hand, it has also taken extreme precaution in the enforcement of the Ḥudūd of Islamic Law. The Law of Evidence as

applicable to Ḥudūd is also different from the Law of Evidence as applicable to common matters, and is certainly based on extreme precaution. The slightest shortfall in it renders the Ḥadd of the Sharī'ah to be changed into punitive punishment. Similarly, in the event of any shortcoming being found in determining the completion of the crime, the Ḥadd of the Sharī'ah is dropped and punitive punishment gets activated in its place. The practical outcome of this is that the far-out occasion of enforcing the Ḥudūd of the Sharī'ah would present itself only very rarely (or, as they would say in charged English, only once in a blue moon!) Under normal conditions, even in crimes which fall under Ḥudūd, the punishments given are punitive. But, in a case, where the completion of the crime and the completion of the proof conjoin, even though in one per cent cases, the punishment given is very stringent, something which would inspire awe, something mind-boggling and heart-rending, something which would cause the next aspirant cold feet before even touching a crime like that. This kind of punishment, notwithstanding objections, becomes the source of eradication of crimes and the blessing of public peace for ever. This stands in stark contrast against societies built around penal laws with which hardened criminals keep playing as some sort of sport they enjoy. They sit in jails making programs to do what they have been doing all along much better next time they are out there. There are countries where the Ḥudūd of the Sharī'ah are imposed even now. A look at conditions which prevail there would bring the reality in the open. You do not see there a lot of people with amputated hands, nor is there an event of stoning to death (*Rajm*) for years and years together. But, such is the standing awe and dread and fear of these punishments in hearts that theft, robbery and immodesty do not seem to exist there. Muslims have the first-hand and direct knowledge about conditions in Saudi Arabia because Muslims of all classes and countries have the good fortune of being there in connection with Hajj or 'Umrah. Five times everyday, everyone sees that shops and stores are open. Merchandise worth millions is lying there and their owner leaves for the Sacred Mosque at prayer time without closing them - and comes back from there only after having made his prayers in perfect peace. He

never has any scruples about anything having disappeared from where he had left it. Then, this is not a matter of one day. This is a matter of whole life and how it goes on. Do this in any 'civilized' country of the world, you will end up with hundreds of thefts and robberies in a single day. Strange are the ways of those who claim to be the standard bearers of civilization and human rights. They are compassionate to professional criminals but they have no mercy for the whole humanity harassed by them. In cold reality, showering mercy on one criminal amounts to being tyrannical to the whole humanity. This attitude is the greatest cause of disturbing public peace and tranquility. This is the reason why He, who is the Lord of all universes and worlds, and who provides sustenance to the virtuous and the vicious, the pious and the polytheists, the saints and the sinners, and who gives to snakes, scorpions, lions and wolves their livelihood, and whose mercy extends to all, it was He who, when He revealed the religious laws of Ḥudūd in the Qur'ān, also said along with it: وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُم بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ that is, 'do not show mercy to these criminals in enforcing the Ḥudūd of Allah.' On the other hand, He declared Qiṣāṣ (the Law of Even Retaliation) to be the life of humanity: وَلَكُمْ فِي الْقِصَاصِ حَيٰوةٌ يَّاُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ that is, 'for you in Qiṣāṣ there is life, O people of understanding.' It appears that those who oppose and obstruct the institution of Islamic Ḥudūd, just do not wish that crimes be eradicated. Otherwise, as far as mercy is concerned, who else, if not Islam, can be the teacher? It is Islam which has recognized the right of even enemies and killers in the heat of the battlefield where it demands: Hold your hands before women, hold your hands before children, hold your hands before the aged, and do not kill the religiously observing not fighting against you on the battlefield but are busy with worship in their way.

What is most astonishing is the cold fact that objections against Islamic punishments are raised by, of all the people, those have their hands red with the blood of hundreds and thousands of innocent and blame-free human beings of Hiroshima even to this day, human beings who may have never dreamed of fighting and killing in a battlefield and included among them are women and children and old people, a

whole lot of human beings indeed! And these are the people whose fury has still not subsided even after the tragedy of Hiroshima and who are still going ahead with all sorts of goals and projects and experiments to build and stock nuclear weapons of mass destruction.

Other than this, there is not much we can say, except raise our hands in prayer - May Allah remove the curtains of selfishness from their eyes and may He guide them towards the true Islamic methods of establishing peace in the world.[1]

Verses 41 - 43

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الرَّسُوْلُ لَا يَحْزُنْكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْكُفْرِ مِنَ
الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَلَمْ تُؤْمِنْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ۚ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ
هَادُوْا ۚ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِقَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ ۙ لَمْ يَاْتُوْكَ ؕ
يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهٖ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنْ اُوْتِيْتُمْ هٰذَا
فَخُذُوْهُ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تُؤْتَوْهُ فَاحْذَرُوْا ؕ وَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ فِتْنَتَهٗ فَلَنْ
تَمْلِكَ لَهٗ مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّطَهِّرَ

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1. This is the basis of the nuclear conflict among nations. The haves want to keep what they have and stop others from having it. If others have it, that will be 'proliferation'. The power to destroy must stay with the powerful. Because, powerful is responsible. But, was it? So, being powerful, or mutually cooperating powerfuls, is no guarantee that nuclear weapons will not be used. Human beings of one country sitting on their nukes and talking about world peace is hardly believable.

Let's say Amen to the prayer.

A word about the use of the word, 'deterrent' with nuclear weapons. They are there, just in case ... They are supposed not to be used first. They are for retaliation. The having of nuclear weapons means that everybody should behave, or else! So, they are 'deterrents', telling people to be careful and not mess around. So human beings can have deterrents to check the irresponsible behaviour of others, the behaviour of 'rogue' states, for example. Now, if God were to enforce His own deterrent against criminals, robbers and thieves and fornicators, in His wisdom, how could that become 'savage' overnight? Or, is it that what a set of human beings can do in their 'self-interest', cannot be done by God, in His Wisdom? ... Mercy! (Tr.)

قُلُوبَهُمْ ۚ لَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ ۖ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ
عَظِيمٌ ﴿٤١﴾ سَمَّاعُونَ لِلْكَذِبِ أَكَّالُونَ لِلسُّحْتِ ۚ فَإِنْ جَاءُوكَ
فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ أَوْ أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ تُعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ فَلَنْ
يَضُرُّوكَ شَيْئًا ۖ وَإِنْ حَكَمْتَ فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَكَيْفَ يُحَكِّمُونَكَ وَعِنْدَهُمُ التَّوْرَاةُ
فِيهَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَٰلِكَ ۚ وَمَا أُولَٰئِكَ
بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

O Messenger, those who race towards disbelief should not be a cause of grief for you - those who say with their mouths, "We believe," while their hearts do not believe, as well as those who happen to be Jews. They are listeners of the lie, listeners for other people who did not come to you. They displace the words after their having been properly placed. They say, "If you are given this, take it, and if you are not given this, then avoid." And the one whom Allah wills to put to trial, for him you shall never be able to do anything against Allah. They are the ones whose hearts Allah did not intend to purify. For them there is humiliation in this world. And for them there is a great punishment in the Hereafter. [41]

Listeners of the lie! Eaters of the unlawful! So, if they come to you, judge between them or turn away from them. And if you turn away from them, they can do you no harm. And if you judge, judge between them with justice. Surely, Allah loves those who do justice. [42] **And how do they ask you to judge while the Torah is there with them having the judgement of Allah? Still, they turn away, after all that. They are no believers.** [43]

Sequence of the Verses

Continued from the third Section of Sūrah al-Mā'idah was the subject around the People of the Book. In between, some other subjects, though very few, appeared where particularly appropriate. Now, the

text resumes that subject again which goes on further ahead. The People of the Book already had two groups among them. Joining them was a third group. They were really Jews who had become Muslims hypocritically. They would show their Muslim face before Muslims but when they sat with their co-religionist Jews, they mocked Islam and Muslims. The three verses appearing above concern the doings of these three groups which show that they prefer their desires and opinions over the injunctions and instructions of Almighty Allah and keep trying to interpret and mould them to their own choices. These verses tell us about the disgrace and evil end of such people in this world as well as in the Hereafter. As a corollary, there appear some guiding principles and injunctions for Muslims.

The Background of the Revelation

Two events which are the cause of the revelation of the cited verses relate to Jewish tribes who lived in the vicinity of Madīnah during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. One of these events was that of Qatl and Qiṣāṣ (killing and retaliation) and the other, that of Zinā (fornication) and its punishment.

It is not hidden from anyone who knows history (as it is) that tyranny prevailed all over before the advent of Islam. Mastery was for the powerful and slavery, for the weak. The powerful and the influential had their laws different from the weak and the meek. Not too far is an extension of that approach in our own time where some of our so-called civilized countries had separate laws for the black and the white. But, across this bridge of history, came the blessed benefactor of humanity, the Arab Prophet, may the blessings of Allah be upon him, and peace, who alone erased these distinctions. It was he who first declared equality of rights for the progeny of Adam and taught human beings their essential lesson in humanity.

Before the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to Madīnah, there lived on the outskirts of Madinah two tribes of Jews, Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Naḍīr. Out of the two, Banū Naḍīr were more powerful and wealthy than Banū Qurayẓah who constantly suffered at their hands and could do nothing about it. Matters reached to the point when Banū Naḍīr forced Banū Qurayẓah to agree to a disgraceful pact whereby if a man from Banū Naḍīr were to kill a man from Banū

Qurayẓah, they would not have the right to take his life in Qiṣāṣ (retaliation). Instead, stipulated the pact, they will receive only seventy *Wasaq* of dates as his blood money (*Wasaq*, Arab measure of weight approximately equivalent to 195.30 kg). As for the case being the reverse of it, if a man from Banū Qurayẓah were to kill a man from Banū Naḍīr, the law will be that the killer will be killed and, on top of it, blood money will be taken, and that too, twice as much as compared to what Banū Naḍīr were entitled to, that is, one hundred and forty *Wasaq* of dates. Attached along with these were more conditions such as, if a woman from Banū Naḍīr were to be killed, a man from Banū Qurayẓah will be killed in retaliation; and if the person killed were to be a man, two men from Banū Qurayẓah will be killed in retaliation; and if a slave from Banū Naḍīr has been killed, a free man from Banū Qurayẓah will be killed in retaliation; and if one hand of a man from Banū Naḍīr has been cut by someone, two hands of a man from Banū Qurayẓah will be cut; if one ear has been cut, two ears of their man will be cut. This was 'law' before Islam as it prevailed between these two tribes and Banū Qurayẓah being weak had no choice but to go along with it.

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم migrated to Madīnah, it became Dār al-Islām, a homeland of Muslims. These two tribes had not embraced Islam upto that time nor were they bound to follow Islamic law under any treaty obligation. But, they were observing the justice and common good brought in by Islamic law from a distance. During this period, it so happened that a man from Banū Qurayẓah killed a certain man from Banū Naḍīr. According to the pact mentioned above, Banū Naḍīr demanded the doubled blood money (*Diyat*) from Banū Qurayẓah. As said earlier, Banū Qurayẓah were neither a part of the Muslim community nor did they have any existing pact with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, they were Jews who had among them many learned people as well. They knew on the strength of the prophecies of the Torah that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the promised Last Prophet the glad tiding of which was given by the Torah. But, they had not declared their faith in him because of religious prejudice or temporal greed. Since they were watching that the Last Prophet's religion is a standard bearer of human equality and justice, they used it as a crutch to get rid of the tyranny of Banū Naḍīr. They refused to

pay the doubled blood money on the plea that they belonged to the same family, same country, and same religion, that is, Judaism, and that they were not going to tolerate the unjust treatment meted out to them because of their weakness against tyranny right upto that day.

This reply enraged Banū Naḍīr to the point of an imminent war. But, later, on the advice of some elders, it was decided that this matter should be taken to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for his decision. Banū Qurayẓah could not have it any better. They already knew that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was not going to allow the injustice of Banū Naḍīr to continue. As for Banū Naḍīr, though they did agree to mutual conciliation talks under a situation of duress, but they also backed it up with a conspiracy when they sent a group of people to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before their case was to be presented in his court. These people were really their co-religionists, that is, they were Jews but kept in touch with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by hypcritically assuring him of their Islam. Their objective was to somehow find out the view of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم before he hears and decides the case. So, the mandate and instruction given to these people was that they should accept what he said subject to the condition that it was in favour of their demand, and in the eventuality that his judgement turned out to be contrary to this, they were told not to make any commitments about its acceptance.

This event describing the cause of the revelation of these verses has been reported in detail by al-Baghawī while the Musnad of Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd have reported its summary from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه - (Maẓharī).

Similar to this, there is another event, that of Zinā (fornication). Reporting its details, al-Baghawī says that it took place among the Jews of Khaybar. According to the punishment prescribed by the Torah, the couple involved had to be stoned to death. But, both of them belonged to some influencial family. The Jews, acting in accordance with their old habit, looked for a softening of the punishment for them knowing that the religion of Islam gives leaves and concessions liberally. Based on this, they assumed that Islam would reduce this punishment as well. So, the people of Khaybar sent a message to their clansmen of Banū Qurayẓah asking them to have this case settled by

Muḥammad ﷺ and along with it, they sent the two accused as well. Their motivation behind this action was no different as they too instructed their clansmen to accept the verdict of the Holy Prophet ﷺ if the punishment awarded by him turned out to be light, but they were to reject it if the case was otherwise. At first, Banū Qurayẓah were reluctant about the proposal. They did not know how the case will be decided by him and once they were there, they would have to accept the verdict. But, after further consultations, they decided that some of their chiefs should take the accused couple to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and request him to decide the case.

So, a deputation of Ka'b ibn Ashraf and others accompanied by the accused couple came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They asked: 'If a married man and a married woman are involved in adultery, what punishment do they get?' He said, 'Will you accept my verdict?' They said that they would. At that moment, Sayyidnā Jibra'īl appeared with a command from Almighty Allah which announced that their punishment was stoning to death. When these people heard this verdict, they were taken aback. They refused to accept it.

Sayyidnā Jibra'īl advised the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that he should ask these people to appoint Ibn Ṣūryā as the arbitrator before deciding whether to accept or not to accept the verdict. Then, he told him about Ibn Ṣūryā and his identity. He asked the members of the deputation if they knew the youngman who is white but blind in one eye. He lived in Fidak and His name was Ibn Ṣūryā. Everyone confirmed that they did. He asked, 'What do you think about him?' They said, 'Of the learned people among Jews, there is no scholar greater than him on this earth.' He said, 'Call him in.'

So, he came. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم asked him on oath, 'What is the injunction of the Torah in this case?' He said, 'By the Being in whose name you have put me on oath, if you had not put me on oath in that manner, and I did not have the apprehension that a false statement on my part would make the Torah burn me, then, I would have not revealed the reality. The reality is that the Torah too, like the injunction in Islam, does carry the command that both of them should be killed by stoning (*Rajm*).'

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said, 'What has come upon you now that you act against the injunction of the Torah?' Ibn Ṣūryā replied, 'The fact of the matter is that, religiously and legally, this is the punishment of adultery with us. But, since a prince of ours got involved in this crime, we showed leniency to him and let him go. We did not stone him to death. Later, the same crime was committed by an ordinary man. People responsible decided to stone him to death. The supporters of the criminal protested demanding that the Jewish Legal Punishment decided for this man should be given to the prince first, otherwise, they threatened, they would resist and block the execution of the punishment against him. When things dragged on, they sat together and compromised on just one light punishment for all, leaving the injunction of the Torah aside. So, we came up with a punishment which required some beating and the taking out of a procession with the culprits having their faces blackened with soot (a symbol of disgrace). This, then, became the usual custom with everyone.'

Commentary

We now know the details of the background in which the present three verses (41-43), and others which will follow, were revealed. Their gist is that the Jews were habitually used to issuing religious edicts as desired by the people, either for the benefit of relatives or to satisfy their greed for money, property, influence, and recognition. This had become a common custom particularly in matters involving punishments that they would, if the crime was committed by an influential person, change the severe punishment of the Torah into an ordinary one. It is this behaviour pattern of theirs which has been described in the first verse (41) in the following words: يُحَرِّفُوْنَ الْكَلِمَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوَاضِعِهِ (They displace the words after their having been placed properly).

When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم took up residence in Madīnah, these people started noticing changes. The Islamic Rule of Law was working as a unique system. It was simple, open and full of conveniences. Then, it had a reasonable set-up to eradicate crimes through appropriate punishments. Now the people who were used to making the severe punishments of the Torah easy for their clients by changing them saw an opportunity for themselves whereby they could take such shady matters to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and make him their

judge or arbitrator. The dual advantage they saw in it was that they would reap the benefits of all easy and light rules of Islamic Law while, at the same time, they would not have to commit the crime of altering the Torah. But, here too, they had their crookedness at work as they would hold on to their decision of taking their case to him until such time that they succeeded in finding out beforehand through some source or ruse as to the actual verdict which would be delivered in their case when presented. Then, if they found this verdict matching their wishes, they would make him their arbitrator and have him decide their case. If it happened to be contrary to their wishes, they would leave it at that. Since the events of this nature had caused pain to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, he has been comforted in the opening sentence of the verse that he should not grieve about their behaviour because it would finally turn out to be good for him.

Then, Allah Almighty let him know that these people were not making him a judge in their case sincerely. Their intentions were mischievous. Then, in the later verse (42), he was given the choice to either decide or avoid their case as he wished. He was also assured that they will not be able to harm him in any way, if he wished to avoid them. This is what the verse: فَاحْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ أَوْ أَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ (judge between them or turn away from them) means. Then, in the part of the verse which follows immediately, it was stated that should he elect to decide their case, the guideline given is that the decision has to be just. In other words, it meant that he was to decide the case in accordance with his Sharī'ah because, after the coming of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, all former religious codes and their laws stand abrogated, except those which have been retained in the Holy Qur'ān and the Sharī'ah of the Last Prophet. It is for this reason that the act of deciding a case on the basis of another law, custom or usage contrary to the Divine Law has been declared to be injustice, sin and disbelief in later verses.

Judicial Process for Non-Muslims in an Islamic State

At this point, it should be borne in mind that these Jews who sent their cases to the court of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not believe in him or his Sharī'ah nor were they Dhimmīs (non-Muslim citizens) protected by Muslims. However, they did have a no-war pact with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is why he was given the option to ei-

ther turn away from them, or give a decision in their case according to his Sharī'ah because no responsibility for them falls on the Islamic state. If they were Dhimmīs (protected non-Muslim citizens of a Muslim State) and approached the Islamic government, the responsible Muslim official would have been duty-bound to give a verdict in their case. Avoiding it would have not been permissible because watching over their rights and removing injustice done to them is the duty of an Islamic government. Therefore, in a verse which will appear a little later (49), it has also been said: وَاَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ (And judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their desires ...) In other words, it means: If these people bring their case to you, decide it in accordance with your Sharī'ah.

No choice has been given in this verse. Instead, the command is to decide as prescribed. In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has accomodated the sense of both these verses by suggesting that the first verse where a choice has been given relates to non-Muslims who are not citizens or Dhimmīs of the Islamic state but continue to live where they are under a pact, such as, the position of the tribes of Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Naḍīr. They had nothing to do with the Islamic state except that they were bound by a no-war pact. And the second verse concerns particular non-Muslims for whom Muslims are responsible and who are citizens of the Islamic state and owe allegiance to its legal government.

Worth pondering here is that in both these verses - the first verse which gives a choice and the second which gives a specified command - the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should decide cases of these non-Muslims, whenever he does so, in accordance with the injunctions revealed by Almighty Allah, that is, in accordance with his Sharī'ah - and not in accordance with the wishes of these non-Muslims or the religion they follow.

To explain, it can be said that this injunction is related to events which have been described under the background of the revelation of these verses. Of these, one concerned the punishment for killing and blood money while the other was that of adultery and its punishment. In such punishments of crimes, the universal practice is to have a common law for the whole country. In this common law, no discrimination

is made on the basis of classes or religions, for example, amputating the hand of the thief which would not apply to Muslims alone, but would be the punishment for every citizen of the country. Similarly, the punishments for killing and adultery will also be common to everyone. But, it does not make it necessary that personal and purely religious matters of non-Muslims should also be decided in accordance with the Islamic Sharī'ah.

Take an example from the conduct of the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Though he did declare liquor and swine unlawful for Muslims and prescribed a punishment for it, but he left non-Muslims free of any obligations in this matter. In addition to that, he never interfered in the personal law of non-Muslims pertaining to marriages and similar other matters. In fact, he accepted their marriages as valid.

With the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula, the Magians of Ḥajar and the Jews and Christians of Najrān and Wādī al-Qurā became Dhimmīs (protected non-Muslim citizens) of the Islamic state. That the Magians believed in marriage with even a mother and sister as lawful was known to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Similarly, marriage without 'Iddah (waiting period), or witnesses, was valid among Jews and Christians. But, he did not interfere in their personal matters and took their marriages as valid.

In short, it can be said that decisions about personal law and religious matters of non-Muslims who are citizens of a Muslim state shall be left to their own religion and thinking - and should there be the need to arrive at a judicial settlement of their cases, a judge from their own religion will be appointed to decide them.

However, in the event that they turn to a Muslim judge or ruler and show that the concerned parties would agree with the decision given, then, the Muslim judge or ruler will deliver his judgement but in accordance with his Sharī'ah - because he is now the legally appointed arbitrator as approved by the parties concerned. In the noble verse: وَأَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ (Judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their desires - 49) appearing a little later, the command to decide in accordance with the Islamic Sharī'ah given to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is based either on the matter being that of common law from which no section can be exempted, or rests on the basis

that such people have themselves come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, have taken him as the arbitrator and wish that he himself should decide their case. Thus, it becomes obvious that his decision should be the one he believes in and which is also the mandate of his Sharī'ah.

Now as we move on to other aspects of verse 41, we see that it begins with words of comfort for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, after which, he has been informed of the conspiracy hatched by the Jews, the description of which goes right upto its end. It reveals that the deputation coming to him was comprised of hypocrites who were secretly in league with the Jews and it is at their behest that they were going to see him. After that, there is a description of some evil traits of character the visiting group has against which Muslims have been warned. As an adjunct, it has been pointed out that these traits of character are rejectionist in nature, therefore, effort should be made to stay safe from them. Listed below are these four evil traits of character.

1. The first trait identified is: سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِلْكَذِبِ (They are listeners of the lie). It means that they are used to listening to and going by what is false. They are the kind of blind followers of unfaithful Jews who see to it that they are called men of learning who would go on following them despite noticing that they were openly negating the injunctions of the Torah, worse still, they would continue being satisfied with their fictional interpretations of it.

Following *'Ulamā'*: The Norm for People

The way those making alterations and adulterations in the injunctions of Allah and His Messengers have been warned here, indicted similarly are those too who take such people as their leaders in religion and get used to listening to false and fabricated presentations from them. Offered here is an important rule of guidance for Muslims that, though the only way of following the obligations of religion open to unlettered masses is to act in accordance with the ruling (*Fatwā*) and teaching (*Ta'līm*) of *'Ulamā'* (traditionally trained, morally groomed, professionally equipped men and women of learning and living and teaching in accordance with the inviolable truth of the Qur'ān and Sunnah - a sense not carried by stray equivalents of scholars, the learned, religious leaders, divines, priests, et al. Tr.). But, this is a re-

sponsibility from which the masses too cannot escape. It is their duty to first find out what they are doing. Before they take a Fatwā or hope to act correctly in a religious matter, they must at least investigate into the antecedents of those they are going to follow. This is like a sick person looking for a good physician. He consults people who know about the best in the field, about their education, expertise, practice, professionalism, moral quality and human dealing. After this possible assessment, if one makes a mistake and falls into the trap of a quack or charlatan, a reasonable person would not blame him. But, anyone who did not take the trouble of investigating and landed into the lair of a false practitioner and messed up his life, then, he alone will be responsible for his suicide.

The same principle applies to the dissemination of knowledge about religious matters for common people. If one of them first did what was necessary, talked to people of knowledge, expertise and experience available in his area and was able to pick up an 'Ālim to consult and follow, and acted according to his Fatwā, then, he would be considered excusable not only in the sight of people but also in the sight of Allah. In a *hadīth* relating to a similar matter, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: فَإِنَّ إِثْمَهُ عَلَى مَنْ أَفْتَى which means, if in a situation like that, should the 'Ālim or Muftī make a mistake, and a Muslim acts in accordance with this incorrect Fatwā, then, the sin for having acted in that manner does not fall on him, but it does on that 'Ālim or Muftī - and that too would apply in a situation when that 'Ālim or Muftī had made such a mistake knowingly, or had fallen short in deliberating on the problem to the best of his ability, or, may be, he was no 'Ālim or Muftī to begin with, and had taken that responsible office through fraud or favour.

But, if a person takes someone as an 'Ālim (a source of correct religious guidance which is worth following) on his own, without investigating, and does what he says - and the 'Ālim so chosen is really not deserving of being followed - then, its curse will fall not only on that Muftī or 'Ālim alone, but this person who chose him will also share its consequences equally because he gave the reins of his *'Īmān* (faith) into the hands of such a person without any investigation. These are the kind of people the Holy Qur'ān calls 'the listeners of the lie,' people who keep tagged behind their (ill-chosen) religious leaders without

taking the trouble of finding out the truth about their knowledge and integrity, conduct and deeds, trustworthiness and honesty. Unfortunately, they have got themselves into the habit of listening, accepting and being satisfied with fabricated and false narratives from them.

The Holy Qur'ān is talking about the condition of Jews here but the message behind it is actually beamed at Muslims so that they can stay safe against something like that. Unfortunately, this is one of the reasons of the downfall of Muslims in the contemporary world. They are quite smart in their mundane matters. When sick, they find the best physician. When stuck with a case, they will search out the best lawyer. When they make a house, they can dig out the top architect and engineer. But, when it comes to the matter of religion, they become so careless that they would take any man with a beard, a long shirt and a glib tongue as their religious leader, 'Ālim, Muftī or guide. They would do that without bothering to find out whether or not this person was educated and trained formally in a reliable institution of higher religious learning; whether or not he has sat at the feet of experts in the field and culled the taste and temperament of the knowledge of *Dīn*; whether or not he has made intellectual contributions during his career; whether or not he has benefited from the company of truly pious elders and Men of Allah by imbibing from them the essential virtues of Taqwā (fear of Allah) and Tahārah (physical and spiritual purity)?

The result of this carefree attitude is that a large section of people from among Muslims who do turn to religion unfortunately falls into the fishing nets of ignorant preachers and commercial *pīrs* and becomes far-removed from the correct path of religion. For people like that, their knowledge of religion stands reduced to tales which leave their desiring selves untouched and which, then, gives them the delusion that they are following religion and doing a lot of worship. But, its reality is what has been described in the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

اَلَّذِيْنَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُوْنَ صُنْعًا

They are the people whose efforts and deeds have gone waste within the life of the world while they are thinking that they have done something good.

Concluding with a summary, we can say that the Holy Qur'ān identifies an important principle by describing the hypocrites from among the Jews as 'the listeners of the lie.' The principle is that following 'Ulamā is inevitable for people at large, but it is their responsibility that they should not follow anyone as their 'Ālim or guide in religion without prior investigation as a result of which they may not become habituated to listening to what is false from ignorant people.

2. Describing the other evil trait of these hypocrites, it was said: سَمّٰعُوْنَ لِقَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ لَمْ يَاْتُوْكَ (listeners for other people who did not come to you). It means that these people have obviously come to ask you about a religious matter. But, the truth of the matter is that their objective is neither religion nor some ruling about it. In fact, they are the spies of the kind of Jewish people who did not come to you by themselves because of their arrogance. The deputationists, following the wishes of their senders, simply want to find out your view of the punishment of adultery and let their senders know about it who will themselves decide whether or not they would accept the verdict. In this, there is warning for Muslims that whoever seeks a Fatwā from an 'Ālim of *Dīn* is bound by the condition that the intention of the seeker must be to find out the command of Allah and His Messenger and to follow it. Any effort to find out from one Muftī, or more than one, the objective solution of a religious problem, then, going about looking for a solution which suits one's desires is an open demonstration of following one's own desiring self - and Shayṭān. This should be avoided.

3. Describing the third evil trait of these people, it has been said that they 'displace the words (of Allah) after their having been placed properly,' which means that, by doing so, they give the Word of Allah a meaning which is not intended and thus try to alter Divine injunctions. Included here is the possibility of making some changes or alterations in the very words of the Torah, as well as the eventuality that they keep the words as they are but make interpretations and alterations which are absurd in meaning. The Jews are used to doing it both ways.

In this, the warning given to Muslims is that Allah Almighty has Himself taken the responsibility of protecting the Holy Qur'ān. As for an alteration in its words, nobody can dare to do that because it is sim-

ply not a matter of what is written in the already countless copies of the Qur'ān, but also that of what lies secured in the memory banks of millions of human beings. Anyone who makes the slightest mistake of mispronouncing even a short vowel is caught instantly. As for an alteration in meaning, it can obviously be done - and doers have done it too. But, for its security, Almighty Allah has made the arrangement that there shall remain in this Ummah right through the Last Day of Qiyāmah, a group of people who would be armed with the correct meaning and message of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and they would be enough to unmask the alterers, corrupters and distorters of their meanings.

Bribery and its evil consequences

4. The second verse (42) mentions another evil trait of these people by calling them: أَكّٰلُونَ لِلسُّحْتِ translated here as 'eaters of the unlawful' making 'the unlawful' to stand for the word, '*suḥt*' in the text. The literal meaning of Suḥt is to uproot or destroy something totally which is the sense in what the Qur'ān says in: فَيُسْحِتَكُمْ بِعَذَابٍ , that is, (do not forge lies against Allah) lest He destroy you with a punishment - 20:61). But, at this place in the Qur'ān, Suḥt denotes bribe. Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه, Ibrāhīm Nakha'ii, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Mujāhid, Qatādah and Ḍaḥḥāk and other leading authorities in Tafsīr have explained it as bribe.

The reason for equating bribe with Suḥt (total destruction; also - unlawful earning, detestable enough to be shunned) is that it not only destroys its givers and takers alike but also goes on to uproot the whole country and community and destroy public peace and tranquility (by causing rise in illegal gratification and fall in avenues of honest earning). When bribery gains currency in a country or a department, law freezes and bribery stays hot. As for the law of a country, it is the only power which maintains peace and stability. When law and order stand suspended, nothing remains safe, life or property or honour, nothing. Therefore, by calling it Suḥt, the Sharī'ah has declared it to be gravely Ḥarām, forbidden and unlawful. Moreover, to block all possible doors of bribery, even the gifts given to officials or leaders or dignitaries of a country have also been classed as Suht or bribe in an authentic *Ḥadīth*, and has been declared to be Ḥarām. (Jaṣṣāṣ)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a *ḥadīth*: Almighty Allah

causes His curse to fall on the giver and taker of bribe - and on him too who acts as a broker between them. (Jaṣṣāṣ).

The Islamic Legal definition of *Rishwah* (meaning bribery) is the taking of compensation for something the taking of which would not be legally correct. For example, a person doing a job, the doing of which is included within his duty, and the fulfilling of which is mandatory on him, cannot take any compensation for it from any party. If taken, that is bribe. Functionaries of governments, officials or clerks, higher or lower, are all obligated to do their duties by virtue of being paid employees of the government. If they take something from the person whose case they are handling, that will be a bribe. The father and mother of a girl are responsible for the marriage of their daughter. They cannot take any 'compensation' for doing that. If they take any 'compensation' from the person who will have the hands of their daughter in marriage, that is a bribe. *Sawm* (fasting), *Ṣalāh* (prayers), Ḥajj (pilgrimmage) and the *Tilāwah* (recitation) of the Qur'ān are 'Ibādah' (acts of worship) with which Muslims have been obligated. The taking of any 'compensation' from anyone is a bribe. However, the duty of the Teaching of Qur'ān and the duty of leading *Ṣalāh* as Imām are exempt from this (as ruled by later Muslim jurists).

Then, a person who takes bribe and does someone's job as it should rightfully be done, he commits the sin of taking bribe and the money or material he has 'earned' is '*suḥt*,' and unlawful for him. And should he do it as it should have not been done rightfully, then, this becomes another grave crime, that of wastage of what was right and that of changing an express command of Allah, in addition to the initial one. May Allah keep all Muslims safe from this curse.

Verses 44 - 50

إِنَّآ أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرٰىةَ فِيْهَا هُدًى وَّنُوْرٌ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ
أَسْلَمُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَالْأَحْبَارُ بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوْا مِنْ
كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ ۚ فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ
وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِيْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا ۗ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ

فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيْهَآ اَنَّ النَّفْسَ
بِالنَّفْسِ ۙ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْاَنْفَ بِالْاَنْفِ وَالْاُذُنَ بِالْاُذُنِ
وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ ۙ وَالْجُرُوْحَ قِصَاصٌ ؕ فَمَنْ تَصَدَّقَ بِهٖ فَهُوَ كَفَّارَةٌ
لَّهٗ ؕ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾
وَقَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ
مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ ۖ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْاِنْجِيْلَ فِيْهِ هُدًى وَّنُوْرٌ ۙ وَّمُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا
بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَهُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾
وَلْيَحْكُمْ اَهْلُ الْاِنْجِيْلِ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ
اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ
بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتٰبِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ فَاحْكُمْ
بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَآءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ؕ
لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ اُمَّةً
وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِنْ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيْ مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ ؕ اِلَى
اللّٰهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾
وَاَنِ احْكُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ اَهْوَآءَهُمْ وَاحْذَرْهُمْ اَنْ
يَّفْتِنُوْكَ عَنْۢ بَعْضِ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكَ ؕ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَاعْلَمْ اَنَّمَا
يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يُّصِيْبَهُمْ بِبَعْضِ ذُنُوْبِهِمْ ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ
لَفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ اَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُوْنَ ؕ وَمَنْ اَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ
حُكْمًا لِّقَوْمٍ يُّوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾

Surely We have sent down the Torah, having guidance and light therein by which the prophets, the submitting ones, judge for the Jews, and (so do) the Men of the Lord and the Men of knowledge, because they were entrusted with the protection of the Book of Allah, and

they stood guard over it. So, do not fear people. Fear Me. And do not take a paltry price for My verses. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the disbelievers. [44]

And therein We have prescribed for them: life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear and tooth for tooth; and for wounds, an equal retaliation. Then, whoever forgives it, that will be expiation for him. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the unjust. [45]

And in their wake, We sent 'Īsā son of Maryam, confirming what was before him, that is, the Torah; and We gave him the Injīl having guidance and light therein, and confirming what was before it, that is, the Torah, and a guidance and lesson for the God-fearing. [46]

And the people of Injīl must judge by what Allah has sent down therein. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the sinners. [47]

And We have sent down to you the Book with truth, confirming the Book before it, and a safeguard for it. So, judge between them by what Allah has sent down, and do not follow their desires against the truth that has come to you. For each of you We have made a way and a method. And had Allah willed, He would have made a single community of people, but (He did not), so that He may test you in what He has given to you. Strive, then, to excel each other in good deeds. To Allah is the return of you all. Then Allah shall tell you about what you were disputing in. [48]

And (We have revealed to you) : Judge between them by what Allah has sent down and do not follow their desires, and beware of them lest they should turn you away from some of what Allah has sent down to you. So, if they turn away, be sure that Allah intends to make them suffer for some of their sins. And surely, many of the people are sinners. [49]

Is it, then, the judgement of (the days of) Ignorance that they seek? And who is better in judgement than Allah, for a people who believe? [50]

Sequence of the Verses

This is the third Section of Sūrah al-Mā'idah. Here, Allah Almighty has asked the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims to pay heed to a particular injunction of the creed they all share as being the three communities attached to the Prophetic Tradition. Appearing in different contexts through verses which have gone earlier, this is the serious matter of acting against the pledges given to Almighty Allah and that of changes, alterations and false interpretations made in injunctions sent to them - something which had become a chronic compulsion of habit with the Jews and Christians.

In the first two verses (44,45) of this Section, addressing the people of the Torah, Almighty Allah has warned them on this crookedness and about the sad end it will bring. With it, as a corollary, some congruent injunctions pertaining to Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) have also been mentioned - for the Jewish conspiracy described in the previous verses was related to Qiṣāṣ which the people of the tribe of Banū Naḍīr did not like to be even and because of which they had compelled their weaker rivals, the Banū Qurayẓah, to be content with lesser blood money as compared to themselves. Thus, in these two verses, the Jews have been given a stern warning against imposing their own law contrary to the Law sent down by Almighty Allah and those who do that have been classed as *Kāfir* (disbelievers) and *Ẓālim* (unjust).

After that, the third (46) and the fourth (47) verses are addressed to Christians. They too have been warned against enforcing a law of their own contrary to the Law sent by Allah. And those who do that have been classed as contumacious and disobedient.

Finally, in the fifth (48) and sixth (49) verses, addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Muslims have been instructed that they should take precautions to stay immune from the disease which had afflicted the people of the Book lest they too, God forbid, were to start changing through misinterpretations the injunctions and laws given by Almighty Allah - goaded by greed for money and recognition, or stoop to the haughtier level of making and enforcing a self-made law of their own contrary to His Law.

Also stated here subsequently is an important matter of principle which posits that all prophets, may peace be upon them all, adhered to

the same faith and way as far as believing in and obeying Allah is concerned. But, every prophet was given, as wisdom demanded, a Sharī'ah or Way or Code, appropriate to the nature and need of his time and in which many subsidiary injunctions differ. Thus, as pointed out here, the very Sharī'ah given to a prophet was the wisest choice for that time of the prophet and during which following it was obligatory. When abrogated and replaced by another Sharī'ah, the later, then became what was wise and expedient at its time, the following of which also became equally obligatory. That there is a unique element of wisdom in the phenomena of alternation and variation in the systems of Sharī'ah is a point which has also been made here.

Commentary

In the first verse of the set of verses appearing above, by saying: إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا التَّوْرٰىةَ فِيْهَا هُدًى وَّنُوْرٌ (Surely We have sent down the Torah, having guidance and light therein), the hint given is that the abrogation of the Sharī'ah of Torah at that point of time is not because of any shortcoming of the Torah itself but it has been done rather because of the need to change injunctions with the change of time. Otherwise, the Torah too is a Book revealed by the same Revealer. It has rules of guidance for the Banī Isra'īl and it also has a special light which moves their hearts spiritually.

After that it was said: يَحْكُمُ بِهَا النَّبِيُّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسْلَمُوْا لِلَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا وَالرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ وَالْاَحْبَارُ that is, 'We had revealed the Torah so that, until its Sharī'ah has not been abrogated, all incoming prophets and their deputies, the men of Allah and the 'Ulamā shall all decide and rule in accordance with this Torah making it the working law of their time.' The deputies of the prophets, may peace be upon them all, have been mentioned in two categories - '*Rabbāniyyūn*' and '*Aḥbār*.' The word, '*Rabbāniyy*' is attributed to '*Rabb*' and means 'Man of Allah.' As for '*Aḥbār*', it is the plural form of Ḥibr which, in the Jewish terminology, used to stand for 'Ālim (roughly, a scholar of religious sciences). It is obvious that for one to be a Man of Allah one has to have the knowledge of the necessary injunctions of Almighty Allah, otherwise deed *sans* knowledge is not possible - and no one can become a Man of Allah without obeying Divine injunctions and acting in accordance with them. Similarly, an 'Ālim is, in the sight of Allah, one whose deeds in life are a mirror of his knowledge, otherwise

an 'Ālim who, despite his knowledge of Divine injunctions, does not fulfill his binding religious obligations by doing what is required of him nor shows any concern for his failure to do so, is worse than an ignorant person in the sight of Allah. The outcome is that every Man of Allah is an 'Ālim and every 'Ālim is a Man of Allah (or should be, in principle). But, at this place, by mentioning both separately, a notice of caution has been given - no doubt, knowledge is necessary for a Man of Allah and deed, for an 'Ālim - but, one gets to be identified with his dominant activity or colour (of the rainbow he follows in his path of obedience to Allah) and that becomes the name he is called with. A person who mostly devotes himself to 'Ibādāt (acts of worship), A'māl (deeds) and the Dhikr of Allah (remembrance) and acquires religious knowledge sufficient for his needs, he is called a Rabbāniyy or Man of Allah. This, in our contemporary usage, is given names like Shaykh, Murshid, Pīr and a good many others. As for the person who acquires the highest practical expertise available in religious sciences, and devotes himself to the mission of teaching and training people in the rules of the Sharī'ah, and fulfills the obligations of discharging what is Farḍ, Wājib and Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah - but is unable to spend anymore time in performing Nafl 'Ibādāt (voluntary acts of worship) - he is called 'Hibr' or 'Ālim.

To sum up, it can be said that the explanation given above also makes it clear that there is no dichotomy in Sharī'ah and Tarīqah and no distance between 'Ulamā and Mashā'ikh. They all converge into the basic unity. As far as the difference in their method of work and the predominant area of occupation is concerned, it becomes equally evident that the 'Ulamā (religious scholars) and Sūfis (religious mystics) are not two sects or factions. Far from it, they are, rather, one - in the sense that they both work for the same purpose in life, that of submission and obedience to Allah and His Messenger. But, their comparative methods employed to achieve this purpose do seem to be formally divergent.

After that, it was said: بِمَا اسْتُحْفِظُوْا مِنْ كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ وَكَانُوْا عَلَيْهِ شُهَدَآءَ (because they were entrusted with the protection of the Book of Allah and they stood guard over it). It means that these prophets and their two kinds of deputies, the 'Ulamā and the Mashā'ikh (Men of Knowledge and Men

of Allah) were responsible for enforcing the laws of the Torah because Almighty Allah had entrusted them with the protection of the Torah and they had given the pledge that they would guard it.

Upto this point, the text was referring to the Torah as Divine Scripture and guidance and light which was enforced and guarded by prophets, and their deputies among guides and scholars. Then, the focus turns on to the contemporary Jews who have been censured for not having guarded the Torah as their elders did. They acted crookedly when they started changing its injunctions, for example, the glad tidings of the coming of the Last among Prophets, Muhammad al-Muṣṭafā, may the peace and blessing of Allah be upon him, was mentioned clearly in the Torah and the Jews were asked to believe in him. But, rather than believe in him as required, they became hostile to him. Also given here is the reason as to what prompted them to do so. It was love for power and love for money. They knew that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was a true prophet of Allah but they balked at the thought of following him because they were taken as leaders among their people, common Jews who followed them. Now if they were to embrace Islam, they will turn into common Muslim individuals. Gone will be their pivotal position for power play. Other than this, they had almost made it a profession that they would bend and alter the provisions of the Torah to provide officially endorsed conveniences for influential people against payment of bribes. The contemporary Jews were warned about this practice in the following words:

فَلَا تَخْشَوُا النَّاسَ وَاخْشَوْنِ وَلَا تَشْتَرُوْا بِاٰيٰتِیْ ثَمَنًا قَلِيْلًا

(So, do not fear people, fear Me. And do not take a paltry price for My verses).

It means that they should not fear that their people will stop following them or will turn against them and that they should not alter Divine commands for the sake of insignificant worldly gains for it would ruin them both materially and spiritually because:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ

And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the disbelievers.

In the second verse after that (45), there is a description of the in-

junctions of Qiṣāṣ (Even Retaliation) with a particular reference stressing that 'We had revealed these injunctions in the Torah.' The words of the text are:

وَكَتَبْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ فِيهَآ أَنَّ النَّفْسَ بِالنَّفْسِ وَالْعَيْنَ بِالْعَيْنِ وَالْأَنْفَ بِالْأَنْفِ
وَالْأُذُنَ بِالْأُذُنِ وَالسِّنَّ بِالسِّنِّ وَالْجُرُوحَ قِصَاصٌ

'We had revealed in the Torah this injunction of Qiṣāṣ for the Jews that there will be life for life, eye for eye, nose for nose, ear for ear, tooth for tooth; and for wounds an equal retaliation.'

It will be recalled that the case of Banū Qurayẓah and Banū Naḍīr was brought before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Counting on their power, Banū Naḍīr had compelled the weaker Banū Qurayẓah to agree to their oppressive conditions which stipulated that should a man from Banū Qurayẓah kill a man from Banū Naḍīr, they will have to pay two penalties. The Qiṣāṣ of life for life will be taken as well as the blood money will have to be paid. If the case was the reverse, that is a man from Banū Naḍīr kills a man from Banū Qurayẓah, then, there will be no Qiṣāṣ; only blood money will be paid but that too will be half of what Banū Naḍīr were entitled to.

In this verse, Allah Almighty has exposed the lie of these people by pointing out that the injunctions of equality in Qiṣāṣ (retaliation) and Diyat (blood money) exist in the Torah too. What these people are doing is considered avoidance and that they bring their case to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم for a decision as alleged is no more than a ruse to find an excuse.

At the end of the verse it was said: وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكُمْ بِمَآ أَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ فَأُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ (And whoever does not judge by what Allah has sent down, then, they are the unjust.) It means that people who do not take the injunctions of Allah binding and who do not decide matters in accordance with them, are dissenters to the Divine commandment, its rejectors and rebels. They are unjust. The third verse (46) begins with the mention of the coming of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who was sent to confirm the previous Scripture, that is, the Torah. Mentioned after that is the Injīl because that too, like the Torah, is guidance and light.

In the fourth verse (47) it was said that the people of the Injīl

should enforce injunctions in accordance with the Law revealed by Almighty Allah in the Injīl, and those who enforce what is against the injunctions sent down by Almighty Allah are disobedient, sinners.

The Qur'ān: Custodian of Torah and Injīl

In the fifth (48) and the sixth (49) verse, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saying that to him Allah has revealed the Qur'ān which confirms the Torah and Injīl, Books previous to it, and is their custodian as well. This is because, after the people of the Torah altered the Torah and the people of Injīl made changes in the Injīl, it was the Qur'ān alone which turned out tob the kind of overseer and protector which exposed the alterations made by them, lit up truth and reality in their proper perspective. Even today, the true teachings of the Torah and Injīl still survive through the Qur'ān while those who inherited them and those who claim to follow them have disfigured them to the extent that it has become impossible to distinguish truth from untruth. Towards the end of the verse, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been given the same instruction as was given to the people of the Torah and the people of the Injīl, that is, all orders and judgements given by him should be according to injunctions revealed by Allah, and that he should see through the ploy of these people who intend to have him decide matters according to their wishes and take his guard against their evil plans. There was a particular reason for saying what was said. Some Jewish religious scholars came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They told him that they were religious leaders among the Jews. If they became Muslims, the rest of them would become Muslims too. But, there was a condition to it. They said that they had a legal dispute with his people. They would bring that case to him. If, in this case, he were to decide in their favour, they would embrace Islam. Thereupon, Almighty Allah gave him the word of caution that he should never decide against considerations of equity and justice and the Law revealed by Allah because of the offer to become Muslims made by these people - a proposition which was not for him to worry about.

The Wisdom behind Partial Difference in Sharī'ahs of Prophets

Besides other elements of guidance, this verse carries an answer to a basic question of principle. The question is: When all prophets have

been sent by Allah, and all Books and Sharī'ahs come from Him, why do they differ and why do a coming Book and Sharī'ah abrogate the outgoing Sharī'ah and Book? The answer has been given in this verse, alongwith its wisdom:

لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَّاحِدَةً وَّلٰكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِيمَآ اٰتٰكُمْ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرٰتِ

For each of you, We have made a way and a method. And had Allah willed, He would have made a single community of people, but (He did not), so that He may test you in what He has given to you. Strive, then, to excel each other in good deeds.

To explain this in other words, it can be said that Allah has made for every section among human beings a particular Sharī'ah and particular method of doing things in which, despite common principles, there are expedient differences in subsidiary injunctions. Had Allah so willed, it would have not been at all difficult for Him to make all human beings one community with only one Book and one Sharī'ah for everyone. But, Allah Almighty did not prefer to do so for He intended to test people. He wanted to see who gets to know the reality of *'Ibādah* (worship) and stays alert to receive and respond positively to whatever command comes for them. It may be a new Book or a new Sharī'ah. They will be ready to accept and follow that, no matter how dear the previous Sharī'ah and Book may be to them and no matter how hard its abandoning may be on them because of its grip on them as their ancestral religion. But, such people with their awakened sense of belonging to their ultimate master, always stay tuned to the next Divine call, and always ready to obey. At the other end of this trial shall obviously be those who fail to see this essential reality of obedience, who take to a particular Sharī'ah and Book as closed objectives of life giving it the uncompromising status of ancestral religion as a result of which they choose not to pay any attention to any Divine command.

Great wisdom lies in this difference among Sharī'ahs. This is the channel through which every section of the human community of any time is taught the reality behind genuine *'Ibādah* (worship) and the reality behind human servitude to God. The message given is that the

reality of *'Ibadah* (acts of worship) lies in being an *'Abd*, a servant, and in obeying and following - which does not depend on Ṣalah, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakah or Dhikr of Allah or Tilawah of the Qur'an - nor are these acts of worship an end by themselves. Instead of that, they all have one single purpose behind them: Obedience to the Command of Allah. This is the reason why times during which Ṣalah is prohibited, offering Ṣalah at those times does not bring any reward. On the contrary, it becomes a source of sin. During the days of the two 'Ids, the 'Idul-Fiṭr and the 'Idul-Aḍḥa, when fasting is forbidden, it becomes a sin to fast at that time. Other than the ninth of the month of Dhil-Ḥijjah, gathering in the plain of 'Arafat on any day or month to pray and worship is no reward-worthy act while on the ninth of Dhil-Ḥijjah, this is the greatest *'Ibadah* on the plain of 'Arafat. The same rule applies to all other acts of worship. Done when asked to do, they are *'Ibadah.* But, when they are stopped at a certain limit, they too become Ḥaram, unlawful and impermissible. Ignorant people are usually not aware of this reality. 'Ibadat which become their habit, rather, national customs which they get used to as if they were 'Ibadat, then, they would ignore even open commands from Allah and His Messenger. This is from where sprout the seeds of innovations and deviations (*Bid'at* and *Muḥaddathat*) in established religion which, with the passage of time, become attached to it as if they were a part of it while they are not. This has been the major cause of alterations in past Shari'ahs and Books. By sending different Books and Shari'ahs to different prophets, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* has taught human beings the lesson that they should not take one mode of action or one mode of worship as their primary objective. They should, instead, become obedient servants of Allah in its most desirable sense on the strength of which they should be able to instantly leave what they were doing earlier, as and when asked to do so. And, conversely, they should immediately be ready to do whatever they are asked to do.

Other than this, yet another wisdom behind this difference in Shari'ahs is that since tempers and tastes of human beings from every period and section of the world are different, the variation in the time frame affects human disposition considerably. If subsidiary injunctions were to be made identical for everyone, human beings would be in deep trouble. Therefore, it was the dictate of Divine wisdom that

appropriate change be made in subsidiary injunctions with due consideration of the response patterns of the people of different tastes and times. Here, the religious terminology of Abrogator (*Nāsikh*) and Abrogated (*Mansūkh*) does not mean that the Law Giver did not know conditions before and gave one law - and when new circumstances prevailed it was abrogated - or the earlier law was promulgated by mistake or lack of attention but was changed on later recollection. This is not the way it is. The *Nāsikh* and *Mansūkh* are just like the prescription of a doctor or physician where a change in medicines appears gradually since the doctor or physician knows in advance that a certain symptom will show up in the patient after he or she has used the initially prescribed medicine for three days which then will be the time to prescribe a certain other medicine. So, when he cancels his earlier prescription and replaces it with a new one, it will not be correct to say that the previous prescription was wrong and for that reason it was cancelled. Instead, the truth of the matter is that this very prescription was correct and necessary for use during the initial days of sickness - and under later conditions, the same second prescription is correct and necessary.

A Summary of Subsidiary Injunctions

1. We know from the initial verses that the case brought to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم by the Jews was decided by him. The decision was in accord with the Sharī'ah of the Torah. This proves that the religious injunctions in force in the previous Sharī'ahs remain in force until abrogated by the Holy Qur'ān or Divine Revelation as it was in the cases of the Jews where the injunction concerning equality in Qiṣāṣ (Law of Retaliation) and stoning to death (*Rajm*) in punishment of adultery (*Zinā*) was there in the Torah as well. Then, the Qur'ān too retained it as it was.

2. Similarly, in the second verse (45), the injunction of Qiṣāṣ about the Retaliation for Wounds which has been mentioned with reference to the Torah was enforced in Islam by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. On this basis, the rule of procedure with the majority of the 'Ulamā of Islam is that injunctions of previous Sharī'ahs which have not been abrogated by the Qur'ān are valid, enforcable and obedience-worthy in our Sharī'ah too. That is why, in the cited verses, the people of the Torah have

been asked to decide, judge and obey in accordance with the Torah and the people of the Injīl have been asked to decide, judge and obey in accordance with the Injīl - though both these Books and their Sharī'ahs stand abrogated after the appearance of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. The outcome is that the injunctions of the Torah and Injīl which were not abrogated by the Qur'ān are obedience-worthy even today.

3. The third injunction which stands proved from these verses is that ruling contrary to the injunctions revealed by Almighty Allah is Kufr (disbelief in and rejection of Faith) under some conditions specially when it is combined with belief in its being not true. And under some conditions, it is *Zulm* (injustice) and *Fisq* (disobedience, sin) - when belief-wise, one does accept them as true, but, in practice, does what is contrary to it.

4. The fourth injunction which appears in these verses is that taking bribe is absolutely Ḥarām (unlawful) - specially, the taking of bribe in a judicial case, which is far too grave.

5. The fifth injunction which emerges clearly from these verses is that all prophets, may peace be upon them, and their Sharī'ahs agree in principle, but there is that difference in minute and subsidiary injunctions with them - a difference which is based on considerations of great wisdom.

Verses 51 - 58

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصٰرٰٓى أَوْلِيَآءَ ۘ
بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَآءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ
لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾ فَتَرَى الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ
يُّسَارِعُونَ فِيهِمْ يَقُولُونَ نَخْشٰٓى أَنْ تُصِيبَنَا دَآئِرَةٌ ۚ فَعَسَى
اللّٰهُ أَنْ يَّأْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ أَوْ أَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهِ فَيُصْبِحُوا عَلٰى مَآ
أَسَرُّوا فِيٓ أَنْفُسِهِمْ نٰدِمِينَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوٓا أَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ
الَّذِينَ أَقْسَمُوا بِاللّٰهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ ۙ إِنَّهُمْ لَمَعَكُمْ ۚ حَبِطَتْ
أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَأَصْبَحُوا خٰسِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوا مَنْ

يَّرْتَدَّ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِيْنِهٖ فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِى اللّٰهُ بِقَوْمٍ يُّحِبُّهُمْ
وَيُحِبُّوْنَهٗٓ ۙ اَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ۡ يُجَاهِدُوْنَ
فِىْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا يَخَافُوْنَ لَوْمَةَ لَآئِمٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ
يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ اِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللّٰهُ
وَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ
وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَاِنَّ
حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا
الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَكُمْ هُزُوًا وَّلَعِبًا مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ
مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَالْكُفَّارَ اَوْلِيَآءَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ
﴿٥٧﴾ وَاِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ اتَّخَذُوْهَا هُزُوًا وَّلَعِبًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾

O those who believe, do not take the Jews and Christians for intimate friends. They are friends to each other. And whoever takes intimate friends from them, he is one of them. Surely, Allah does not take the unjust people to the right path. [51]

Now, you see those who have disease in their hearts race towards them saying, "We apprehend that some misfortune may overtake us." So, it is likely that Allah may bring victory or a command from His own side, whereupon they become regretful over what they concealed in their hearts. [52]

And those who believe will say, "Are these the ones who swore by Allah on emphatic oaths that they were with you?" Their deeds have gone waste; hence they became losers. [53]

O those who believe, whoever of you turns back from his Faith, then, Allah shall bring a people whom He loves and who love Him, soft on the believers, hard on the disbelievers, who fight in the way of Allah and are

not afraid of the reproach of any critic. That is a grace of Allah. He confers it on whom He wills. And Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing. [54]

Your only friend is Allah, and His Messenger, and those who believe - those who establish *Salāh* and pay *Zakāh* and bow before Allah. [55] **And whoever takes to friendship with Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, then, the people of Allah are the ones to prevail.** [56]

O those who believe, do not take as friends those who have taken your Faith in jest and fun, those who have been given the Book prior to you, and the disbelievers. And fear Allah, if you are believers. [57]

And when you call for *Ṣalāh*, they take it in jest and fun. That is because they are a people who do not understand. [58]

Explanation in Brief

The verses cited above take up three important subjects which are the basic principles of unity among Muslims as a collectively organized community.

1. Muslims can deal with non-Muslims in the spirit of tolerance, sympathy, goodwill, equity, justice, favour and kindness, almost everything within that line of conduct. In fact, they should do that for they have been taught to do that. But, what is not permitted is the kind of fast friendship and indiscriminating intimacy which may garble the distinctive hallmarks of Islam. This is the issue known as the '*Tark al-Muwālāt*' to refrain from deep (friendship) in Islamic terminology.

2. The second principle stressed upon is that should the Muslims of any time and place shift away from the first principle stated above and develop an intimacy of this nature with non-Muslims, then, let them not be under the impression that their conduct could harm Islam in any manner whatsoever - because Allah Almighty has Himself taken the responsibility of seeing that Islam remains duly protected. It cannot be eliminated by anyone. However, if a set of people still go out of their minds, break the limits of Islamic modality of doing things and, let us presume, decide to leave the very pale of Islam, then, Allah Ta'ālā will bring in another set of people who will uphold and establish

the principles and laws of Islam.

3. Once we know the positive and negative aspects in perspective, it becomes evident that the real friendship of a Muslim - deep, intense, profound and reliance-worthy - can only be with Allah, the Highest of the high, His Messenger, and with those who believe in them.

After this brief introduction of the subject, we can now move to the detailed explanation of the verses.

Commentary

In the first verse (51), Muslims have been commanded not to enter into "Muwālāt" (deep friendship) with Jews and Christians as is the customary practice of non-Muslims in general and, of Jews and Christians in particular, who reserve deep friendship for their own people only. They do not deal with Muslims at the same wave length.

After this clear instruction, should a Muslim do otherwise and enter into an intimate friendship with a Jew or Christian, then, in the sight of Islam, he is fit to be counted as one of them - and not as a Muslim.

The Background of Revelation

Reporting from 'Ikrimah, Ibn Jarīr has said that this verse was revealed in the background of a particular event. After the Holy Prophet ﷺ had settled in Madīnah, he had entered into a treaty with Jews and Christians living nearby which required that they would neither fight against Muslims nor help any other tribe at war with them, rather, they would join Muslims to fight against them. Similarly, Muslims will not fight them nor help anyone against them, rather, would defend them against the aggressors. For some time, both parties kept adhering to the treaty. But, the Jews could not observe the terms of the treaty any longer because of their conspiratorial nature and anti-Islam temperament. They made a secret deal with the pagans of Makkah against Muslims and wrote them a letter inviting them to their fortress. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ came to know about this conspiracy, he despatched a posse of Mujāhidīn to confront them. These Jews from Banū Qurayẓah were, on the one hand, conspiring with the disbelievers of Makkah, while on the other, having infiltrated among Muslims, they had succeeded in making pacts of friendship with many of

them. This was their front of spying for the disbelievers of Makkah against Muslims. Revealed thereupon was this verse which stopped Muslims from indulging in deep friendship with Jews and Christians, so that they could be deprived of having access to sensitive information about Muslims. At that time, some noble Companions, including Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit, openly announced the cancellation of their treaty obligations as well as their support for abandonment of any close friendship in the future. As for the hypocrites who had their pragmatic relationship with Muslims, or people whose hearts had yet to taste the sweetness of genuine faith, they apprehended dangers in breaking relationships with Jews and Christians lest the conspiracy hatched by the disbelievers and the Jews succeeded and Muslims were overpowered in which case it would be necessary that they keep their relationships balanced bothways to avoid any problems for them later on. It was on this basis that 'Abdullāh ibn Ubaiyy ibn Salūl had said that he saw danger in cutting off relationship with these people and, therefore, he cannot do that. Revealed thereupon was the second verse (52):

فَتَرَى الَّذِيْنَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ مَّرَضٌ يُّسَارِعُوْنَ فِيْهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ نَخْشٰٓى اَنْ تُصِيْبَنَا دَآئِرَةٌ ،

> Now, you see those who have disease in their hearts race towards them saying, "We apprehend that some misfortune may overtake us."

It means that after hearing the religiously binding injunction of the abandonment of close friendships, people who have the disease of hypocricy in their hearts started racing towards their disbelieving friends saying that cutting off relationships with these people is dangerous for them.

Answering them, Almighty Allah said:

فَعَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ بِالْفَتْحِ اَوْ اَمْرٍ مِّنْ عِنْدِهٖ فَيُصْبِحُوْا عَلٰى مَآ اَسَرُّوْا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ نٰدِمِيْنَ

> So, it is likely that Allah may bring victory or a command from His own side, whereupon they become regretful over what they concealed in their hearts.

It means that these people are under the impression that the disbelievers and the Jews will overcome Muslims. But, Allah has decided that it will not happen. Rather, close is the conquest of Makkah. Or, even before the conquest of Makkah, Allah may, by exposing the hypocricy of the hypocrites, put them to disgrace. Then, at that time, these people will regret thoughts they had concealed.

This has been clarified further in the third verse (53) where it was said that once the hypocricy of the hypocrites has been exposed and the reality behind their claims and oaths of friendship comes out in the open, Muslims would wonder if those were the people who used to assure them with sworn claims of their friendship and there they were all ruined as everything they did just to pretend had gone to waste. That Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* has mentioned the conquest of Makkah and the disgrace of the hypocrites in these verses was something which everyone saw only after a few days with their own eyes.

The fourth verse (54) tells us that the prohibition of intimate friendship and inter-mingling with non-Muslims is for the good of Muslims themselves. Otherwise, Islam is the particular religion the responsibility to protect which has been taken by Almighty Allah Himself. The crookedness or disobedience of an individual or group is self-destruct in its place. However, should some individual or group from among Muslims were to really abandon Islam itself, turn into an apostate (*Murtadd*) totally and become a part of non-Muslims, even that too could bring no harm to Islam because Allah who is Absolutely Powerful is responsible for its protection and He will immediately bring in some other nation into action which will carry out the duties of protecting and spreading the *Dīn* of Allah. Things He must do depend neither on an individual nor on the largest of the large party or institution. When He so wishes, He can make straws work for beams and logs, otherwise beams and logs sit in forests turning into compost anyway. As referred to elsewhere in this Commentary, how well this was put in an Arabic couplet:

إِنَّ الْمَقَادِيْرَ إِذَا سَاعَدَتْ
اَلْحَقَتِ الْعَاجِزَ بِالْقَادِرِ

When Divine decree helps - it can make the meak overtake the mighty.

When it was said in this verse that should Muslims become apostates, it does not matter, for Allah will make another set of people rise to take their place, then, right there, some virtues of this set of people have also been enumerated saying clearly that they can be marked out by such and such distinguishable qualities. Those engaged in the service of their religion should keep these qualities foremost in their minds because these verses tell us that people who have such quality and character are welcome and dear in the sight of Almighty Allah.

1. Their first quality identified by the Holy Qur'ān is that Allah will love them and they will love Allah. There are two parts to this quality. The first one is the love of these people for Almighty Allah. This could be taken, in one or the other degree, within one's control since one can, even if one does not love someone emotionally or naturally, at least make his intention and determination to work for him in loving intellectually. And even emotional or natural love is though not in one's control, yet its causes are, for instance, the meditation of the greatness and majesty of Almighty Allah, the conception of His most perfect power and the recapitulative survey of His authorities and blessings over human beings. This would definitely generate even natural love for Almighty Allah in the heart of a man or woman.

But, as far as the other part is concerned, that is, the love of Allah will be with these people, it obviously seems to indicate that this is a matter where human choice and action play no role. So, what is beyond our control and choice hardly warrants a description and is obviously fruitless - one may be tempted to wonder.

But, by pondering over some other verses of the Holy Qur'ān, one will discover that the causes of this part of love too are within human control. If someone uses these means, the love of Allah will necessarily be with him or her. Those means of achieving this end have been mentioned in the verse of the Qur'ān which appears in Sūrah 'Āl-'Imran: قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللّٰهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللّٰهُ (Say [O Prophet], "If you do love Allah, follow me; Allah shall love you" ... 3:31).

This verse tells us that one who wishes to have Allah love him or her should make the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the very pivot of life and develop a committed habit of following Sunnah in whatever one does in each and every department of one's life. If so,

the promise of Allah is there - He will love that person. And this very verse also tells us that the only group of people which can stand up and meet the challenge of Disbelief and Apostacy (Kufr and Irtidād) shall be the group of people which follows the Sunnah conscientiously and habitually - neither falling short in obedience to the injunctions of the Sharī'ah, nor initiating and introducing on their own, deeds contrary to the Sunnah.

2. The second quality of this group has been identified as: أَذِلَّةٍ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِينَ (...soft on the believers, hard on the disbelievers ...). Here, the word: *'adhillah'* could be, as explained in Qāmūs, the plural of both *dhalīl* or *dhalūl*. Dhalīl means low or despicable while *dhalūl* means soft and tractable, that is, easily controlled, docile. According to the majority of commentators, this is the meaning of *'adhillah'* at this place, that is, these people will be soft with Muslims. Even in matters of dispute, they can be controlled and mollified easily. They would set the dispute aside, even if they are right in it - as said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in an authentic *ḥadīth*: أَنَا زَعِيمٌ بِبَيْتٍ فِي رَبَضِ الْجَنَّةِ لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَهُوَ مُحِقٌّ that is, 'I am the guarantor of a home in the middle of Paradise for one who abandons dispute despite being in the right.' Thus, the essential meaning of this word comes to be that these people will have no dispute with Muslims in matters relating to their rights and dealings.

The second word is *'a'izzah'* in: أَعِزَّةٍ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِينَ (hard on the disbelievers). Here too, *'a'izzah'* is the plural of *'Azīz* which means dominant, strong and hard. So, the sense is that these people are hard and strong against the enemies of Allah and His *Dīn* who would be unable to control or manipulate them. Now, by combining both sentences we can arrive at the essence of the statement - that this will be a set of people whose love and hate, friendship and enmity will be, not for their person or their rights and dealings, but only for Allah, His Messenger and His *Dīn*. Therefore, when comes the time to fight, it will not be against the obedient servants of Allah and His Messenger, instead of that, it would be against those who are hostile and disobedient to Allah and His Messenger. The same subject appears in a verse of Sūrah Al-Fatḥ where the words are: أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ (severe against disbelievers, merciful between themselves - 48:29).

3. The essence of the first quality was the most perfect fulfillment of the rights of Allah, and the essence of the second quality was moderation in the fulfillment of the rights of the servants of Allah by remaining accomodating in dealings. Now, the third quality of these people mentioned here is: يُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ that is, they shall keep carrying out Jihād to spread and establish the True Faith. In essence, it means that fighting against forces of disbelief and apostacy is no easy task. In this confrontation, traditionally known devotion to worship in seclusion or a simple softness or hardness of attitude is not enough. Also necessary here is a feeling and fervour for the mission of establishing *Dīn*.

4. To ensure that this feeling and fervor achieves its desired perfection, the fourth quality of these people has been identified as: وَلَا يَخَافُوْنَ لَوْمَةَ لَآئِمٍ that is, they will not care for any blame, censure or derogatory criticism directed against them while they are engaged in their efforts to upraise the true word of Allah and establish His *Dīn*. A little reflection will show that the leader of a movement usually faces two types of impediments in his efforts which are the power of the adversary and the vilification of his own people. Experience bears out that people who lead a movement resolutely would stand firm against any adversary, even go through arrests, jail sentences, beatings and tortures, yet, when it comes to facing blames and vilifications from their own people, even the most determined leaders tend to falter. Perhaps, it is to stress the importance of this trying situation at this place, that Allah Almighty has considered it sufficient to say that these people go on with their Jihād without taking notice of any blames directed against them.

Finally, towards the end of the verse (54), it was added that these good qualities of character are nothing but rewards from Almighty Allah. It is He who gives them to whom He wills. A human being cannot acquire these by dint of his own effort and deed without Divine grace.

The *Fitnah* of Apostacy

Through the explanation of the words of this verse, it has already been clarified that the incidence of some from among Muslims turning into apostates will not harm Islam as a religion because Allah will

raise a set of people with high morals and superior deeds who would defend and support it. However, the majority of commentators have dwelt further on the *Fitnah* (trial) of Apostacy (*Irtidād*). According to them, this verse is actually a prophecy of this Trial and at the same time a good news for the group of people who will fight against it and eliminate it successfully. This coming Fitnah of Apostacy was a serious problem the germs of which had already started spreading towards the latermost period of Prophethood. But, after the departure of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم from this mortal world, this became an epidemic spreading all over the Arabian Peninsula. The group blessed with the good news was that of the noble Companions who confronted this onslaught of Apostacy under the command of the first Khalīfah of Islam, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضى الله عنه .

Chronologically, Musaylimah al-Kadhdhāb (the Liar) was the first to claim prophethood alongwith the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and was so audacious that he returned his emissaries back with the threat that he would have killed them had it not been for the protocol which prohibited killing of envoys and emissaries. Musaylimah was a liar in his claim. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not get the time to wage Jihād against him and he left this mortal world.

Similarly, Aswad al-'Ansi, the chief of the tribe of Mudhḥaj in Yaman announced his prophethood. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered the Governor of Yaman appointed by him to fight against him. But, the very next day after the night he was killed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ departed from this mortal world. The news about his being killed reached the noble Companions at the end of Rabī' al-Awwal. Another event like this was reported concerning the tribe of Banū Asad whose chief, Ṭulayḥah ibn Khuwaylid laid a claim to his own prophethood.

Groups from these three tribes had turned Apostates during the last sickness of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The news of his passing away took the lid out of this storm of Apostacy. Seven tribes of Arabia from different places turned against Islam and its legal authority. They refused to pay *Zakāh* as required by Islamic law to the Khalīfah of the time, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضى الله عنه .

After the passing away of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the responsibility of the country and the community fell on the shoulders of

Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضى الله عنه . There was the great shock on the one hand, and the flood of trials and rebellions on the other. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها says that the shock faced by her father, Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, after the passing away of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, was so great that had it fallen on high mountains they would have been reduced to powder. But, Almighty Allah had blessed him with the high station of patience and fortitude by virtue of which he fought against all odds with full determination and courage, and did succeed finally.

Rebellion, as obvious, can be quashed by use of force only. But, conditions had reached a point of danger and Sayyidnā Abū Bakr went into consultation with the noble Companions. None of them approved of a hardline against rebellions. The danger was: If the Companions were to be committed to internal warfare, foreign powers would run over their new Islamic country. But, Allah Almighty made the heart of His 'True one' strong and settled for Jihād. He gave an eloquent Khutbah before the Companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ which opened up their hearts too in favour of Jihād. The power and perfection of his determination and fortitude is reflected through his words:

> "People who, after they have become Muslims, turn back and reject the injunctions given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ , and the Law of Islam, then, it is my duty that I should wage a Jihād against them. If, against me, they decide to bring along the combined force of all Jinns and human beings, and all trees and rocks of the world, all together, and I have no comrade in arms to support me, even then, I would, all by myself, put my neck on the stake and carry out this Jihād."

After having said this, he mounted his horse and started moving ahead. Then, the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, came forward and made Sayyidnā Siddīq al-Akbar sit at his place. In no time, a battle plan was drawn with fronts assigned to different people and the time of their departure set for action.

Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه , Ḥasan al-Basrī, Ḍaḥḥāk, Qatādah and other Imāms of Tafsīr have said that this verse has been revealed about Sayyidnā Abū Bakr Al-Ṣiddīq رضى الله عنه. He was the first one of the promised people about whom it was said in this verse that they will appear to defend Islam at the command of Allah.

But, not contrary to this, is the possibility that some other group could also be included in the sense of this verse. Therefore, respected elders who have pointed out to Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī ﷺ or other noble Companions as being included in the sense of this verse cannot be really taken as contrary to this suggestion. In fact, the most sound and safe position is to believe that all these blessed people, rather every single Muslim due to come right upto the Last Day of Qiyāmah, who will keep confronting disbelief and apostacy in accordance with the commands of the Qur'ān - they all shall be considered as included under the purview of this verse.

Let us now resume our description of how the moving exhortation of Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar made a group of Ṣaḥābah rise to the occasion and meet the challenge of this trial of Apostacy under the leadership of the first Khalīfah of Islam. Assigning an army of fighting men, he sent Sayyidnā Khālid ibn Walīd to Yamāmah to fight against Musaylimah the Liar who had become very poweful in his area. The encounters were tough, but Musaylimah the Liar was ultimately killed at the hands of Sayyidnā Waḥshī, may Allah be pleased with him. His group repented and returned to the fold of Islam. Again, it was Sayyidnā Khālid who went to fight against Ṭulayḥah ibn Khuwaylid. He escaped and went out to some other area. Then, Allah gave him the ability to repent and return to Islam once again. He came back as a Muslim.

The news that Aswad al-'Ansi had been killed and his group had surrendered had reached Madīnah toward the end of the month of Rabī' al-Awwal, the first month of the Ṣiddīqī Caliphate. This was the very first news of victory which reached Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar under such trying circumstances. So, from this point onwards, the noble Companions of the Prophet were also blessed with more clear victories on every front against other tribes which had refused to pay *Zakāh*.

Thus, the practical demonstration of the truth of the word of Allah mentioned towards the end of the fifth verse (56): فَإِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ (then, the people of Allah are the ones to prevail) was seen by the whole world. Speaking historically and objectively, it is a proven fact that the problem of Apostacy did affect some tribes of the Arabian Peninsu-

la after the passing away of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Then, the group that Allah made to rise and fight against the challenge was that of Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar and his colleagues among the Ṣaḥābah. So, it also stands proved from this very verse that the qualities of the promised set of people given in the Qur'ān were all present in Sayyidnā Ṣiddīq al-Akbar and the Ṣaḥābah with him. To restate these, we can say:

1. Allah loves them.
2. They love Allah.
3. They are soft with Muslims and hard against disbelievers.
4. Their Jihād was in the way of Allah in which they were not afraid of any blame.

Pointing out to the reality of realities, it was clearly stressed that all these high qualities of character, their timely use and the ultimate success in the Islamic expedition through them were things which are not achieved by simple reliance on planning or power or numbers. This is nothing but the grace of Allah. It is He who bestows this blessing upon whom He wills.

Marks of True Muslims

In the previous four verses discussed so far, Muslims have been forbidden to maintain intimate friendship with disbelievers. A positive approach has been taken in the fifth verse (55) where those with whom Muslims can have intimate friendship and special camaraderie have been identified. Mentioned first is Allah and then, His blessed Prophet, for Allah is - and He alone can be - the real friend, guardian and guide of a true Muslim, all the time and under all conditions. Other than the relationship with Him, every relationship and every friendship is perishable. As for the bond of fidelity to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is concerned, that too is, in reality, connected with Allah - and not separated. In the last sentence of the verse, the sinceremost friends and fellows of Muslims have been identified as those who are true Muslims - not simply Muslims in name. They have three qualities which mark them out. These are:

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ وَيُؤْتُوْنَ الزَّكٰوةَ وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ

Those who establish *Ṣalāh* and pay *Zakāh* and bow before Allah.

It means that they: (1) Fulfill the obligation of Ṣalāh punctually observing all etiquettes (*'Ādāb*)and conditions (*Sharā'iṭ*) which must be observed in it; (2) Pay *Zakāh* out of their wealth; and (3) they are humble and modest and never become proud and arrogant over their good deeds.

The word, *Rukū'* in the concluding statement of this verse (55) : وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ translated as 'those who bow before Allah' could be taken in more than one sense. Therefore, some of the leading commentators have said that Rukū' refers to the functional Rukū' (bowing position) at this place - which is a basic element (*Rukn* : pillar) of Ṣalāh. And the sentence: وَهُمْ رٰكِعُوْنَ (and those who bow before Allah) has been placed after: يُقِيْمُوْنَ الصَّلٰوةَ (those who establish Ṣalāh) because the purpose is to distinguish the Ṣalāh of Muslims from the prayer offered by others. As for the essential prayer which Muslims call Ṣalāh is something the Jews and Christians also do, but it has no Rukū' in it. Ruku' is a distinctive element of the Islamic prayer known as Ṣalāh. (Maẓharī)

But, the majority of commentators says that Rukū' at this place does not mean the technical Rukū' of Ṣalāh. Rather, it means to bow, to be modest and humble in the lexical sense. Abū Ḥayyān in Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ and Al-Zamakhsharī in Tafsīr al-Kashshāf have gone by this meaning. The same view has been adopted in Tafsīr Maẓharī and Tafsīr Bayān al-Qur'ān. Thus, the meaning of this sentence comes to be that these people do not feel proud of their good deeds; their natural disposition is, rather, modesty and humility.

It appears in some narrations that this sentence has been revealed about Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه in the background of a particular event. It is said that Sayyidnā 'Alī was busy making Ṣalāh on a certain day. When he bowed in Rukū', someone needy turned up and asked for something. He, within that state of Rukū', took out a ring from one of his fingers and tossed it towards him. He could have taken care of the need of this person after having finished his Ṣalāh, but he did not wish to make even that much of a delay in removing the need of a poor faqir. This act of 'racing towards good deeds' was pleasing in the sight of Almighty Allah and it was through this sentence that it was appreciated.

The *Sanad* or authority of this narration is a debated issue among

'*Ulamā* and *Muḥaddithīn*, but, should this narration be taken as correct or sound, it would essentially mean that deserving of the close friendship of Muslims are common Muslims who fulfill the obligations of Ṣalāh and *Zakāh* particularly and regularly - and among them, Sayyidnā 'Alī is specially more deserving of this friendship - as has been said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in another authentic *Ḥadīth*: مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَعَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ (To whomever I am a friend, then, 'Ali too is a friend of his) (narrated by Aḥmad, as in Mazharī). In yet another *ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been reported to have said: اَللّٰهُمَّ وَالِ مَنْ وَالَاهُ وَعَادِ مَنْ عَادَاهُ (O Allah, befriend whoever befriends him and take as enemy whoever shows enmity to him).

Perhaps, Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه has been blessed with this honour because the Fitnah to appear in the future was unveiled before him and he knew that there will be people who will nurse enmity with him and will not hesitate in even rising in rebellion against him - as it did happen during the uprising of the Khawārij.

Anyway, the revelation of the present verse - even if it is related to this event - is worded in a general sense which includes all Companions of the Prophet, and all Muslims. This is not particular to any one individual under a specific command. Therefore, when someone asked Sayyidnā Imām Bāqar: "Do the words: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (those who believe) in this verse mean Sayyidnā 'Alī رضى الله عنه?" He said: "He too, as included under 'believers', is within the purview of this verse."

People of Allah shall prevail ultimately

The next verse (56) gives the good news that such people will overcome the world as come forward in obedience to the Qur'ānic injunctions given in this verse and stay away from forging close friendship with others by limiting themselves to taking Allah, His Messenger and those who have faith in them as their genuine friends. The words of the verse are:

وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فَاِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْغٰلِبُوْنَ

> And whoever takes Allah and His Messenger and those who believe as friends, then, the People of Allah, are the ones to prevail.

In other words, it is said here that those who obey the commands

of Allah are the People of Allah. Given to them is the good news that they will be the ones to finally overcome. The events which unfolded later on confirmed the veracity of this statement when everyone saw that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, overcame all powers which threatened them. When internal rebellions challenged Sayyidnā Abū Bakr, Allah Almighty helped him prevail over all of them. When the towering powers of Ceaser and Cyrus marshalled their menacing might against Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq, Allah Almighty effaced them from the face of the earth. Then, as long as these injunctions were dutifully observed by the Khulafā' and Muslims at large who came after them - by abstaining from establishing close bonds of friendship with non-Muslims - they had always remained winners in the struggle of life.

The Prohibition of Friendship with those who make fun of Islam

In the sixth verse (57), Allah Almighty has again stressed upon the injunction mentioned in verse 51 at the beginning of the Section, the sense of which is that the Muslims should not seek close friendship with people who make fun of their religion. They can be divided in two groups: The People of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians; and the disbelievers and non-Muslims in general. In al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Imām Abū Ḥayyān says that the People of the Book were already included under the word, Kuffār or disbelievers, still, the People of the Book have been mentioned here particularly perhaps, because the People of the Book were, though, closer to Islam as compared with other disbelievers, yet, experience bears that very few from among them embraced Islam. This is the reason why a look into the statistics of those who embraced Islam after the age of prophethood and during the period later to it, will reveal that the majority of them were from among the common disbelievers. The number of those who became Muslims from among the People of the Book will be much lower.

Why would that be so? The reason is simple. The People of the Book take pride in being adherents to Divine Faith and Divine Scripture. This proud partisanship made them opt for not accepting the Truth. The attitude of mockery against Muslims was something that they displayed most. When mockery becomes wickedness, things

much lower can happen, as would be illustrated by an episode mentioned in the eighth (58) verse in the following words: وَإِذَا نَادَيْتُمْ إِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ اتَّخَذُوْهَا هُزُوًا وَّلَعِبًا (And when you call for Ṣalāh, they take it in jest and fun). Tafsīr Mazharī, with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reports the event itself by saying that there was a Christian in Madīnah al-ṭayyibah. When he heard the words : اَشْهَدُ اَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (I testify that Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allah) in the *Adhān* (call for prayer), he used to say: اَحْرَقَ اللّٰهُ الْكَاذِبَ (May Allah burn the liar). At last, this very remark made by him became the cause of his entire family burn to ashes. How this happened was commonplace. When he was sleeping, his servant entered the house with a little fire for some purpose. A speck from it flew out and fell down on some piece of cloth. When everybody was fast asleep, the speck had turned into a blaze and everybody was burnt to death.

The Tragedy of People who do not Understand

At the end of the verse (58), it was said: ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ (That is because they are a people who do not understand). It means that the reason for their jest and fun being directed against what is True Faith could be no other but that they do not understand.

Qāḍī Thanāullāh of Pānī Pat has said in Tafsīr Mazharī that Allah Almighty calls them devoid of understanding although their reason and intelligence in worldly matters is well known. From here we learn that it is possible that one could be very smart and quick-witted in certain kinds of jobs, but when it comes to doing some other things, he either does not use his mind or his mind does not work in that direction. Therefore, he turns out to be dumb in it, like one who does not understand. The Holy Qur'ān has referred to this subject in another verse as follows:

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ

These people do know outward matters of the present life while they are heedless to the Hereafter. (30:7)

Verses 59 - 61

قُلْ يٰۤاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ هَلْ تَنْقِمُوْنَ مِنَّاۤ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰهِ وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ
اِلَيْنَا وَمَاۤ اُنْزِلَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ۙ وَاَنَّ اَكْثَرَكُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ قُلْ هَلْ

أُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِشَرٍّ مِّنْ ذٰلِكَ مَثُوبَةً عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۭ مَنْ لَّعَنَهُ اللّٰهُ وَغَضِبَ
عَلَيْهِ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهُمُ الْقِرَدَةَ وَالْخَنَازِيْرَ وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوْتَ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ
شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَّاَضَلُّ عَنْ سَوَاۗءِ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاِذَا جَاۗءُوْكُمْ
قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا وَقَدْ دَّخَلُوْا بِالْكُفْرِ وَهُمْ قَدْ خَرَجُوْا بِهٖ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ
بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْتُمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

Say, "O People of the Book, do you accuse us only because we have believed in Allah and in what has been sent down to us and what has been sent down earlier, and because most of you are sinners?" [59]

Say, "Should I (not) tell you what is worse than that in its recompense with Allah? (The way of) the one whom Allah has subjected to His curse and to His wrath, and made some of them apes and swines, and who has worshipped the *Ṭāghūt* (Satan, the Rebel). Those are worse situated and far more astray from the straight path." [60]

And when they come to you they say, "We have entered Faith" while they entered with disbelief and with it they went out. And Allah knows best what they used to conceal. [61]

Commentary

Referring to the Jews and Christians in: اَكْثَرَكُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ (most of you are sinners) at the end of the first verse, 'most' - not 'all'- of them have been declared to be outside the fold of Faith. The reason for this is that they did have people among them who remained believers under all conditions. Before the coming of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, they followed the injunctions of the Torah and Injīl and believed in them. When the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came and the Qur'ān was revealed, they believed in him too and started following the injunctions of the Qur'ān.

Consideration of the Addressee : A Principle of *Da'wah*

The condition of a people who were under the curse and wrath of Allah has been introduced through a similitude in the next verse (60)

which begins with : قُلْ هَلْ أُنَبِّئُكُمْ [Should I (not) tell you ...]. In fact, this condition applied to these very addressees. The occasion demanded that they should have been the ones to be directly charged with the blame. But, the Qur'ān has changed the mode of direct address into the form of a similitude (to show consideration). This shows us a distinctive method of Da'wah (Call) as used by prophets, that is, never say things in a manner which makes the addressees angry.

Verses 62 - 63

وَتَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَ اَكْلِهِمُ
السُّحْتَ ط لَبِئْسَ مَاكَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ لَوْ لَا يَنْهٰهُمُ الرَّبّٰنِيُّوْنَ
وَالْاَحْبَارُ عَنْ قَوْلِهِمُ الْاِثْمَ وَاَكْلِهِمُ السُّحْتَ ط لَبِئْسَ مَاكَانُوْا
يَصْنَعُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾

And you see many of them racing towards sin, and aggression, and their eating of the unlawful. Indeed, evil is what they have been doing. [62]

Why do the Men of the Lord and the Men of Knowledge not forbid them from their saying of the sinful and eating of the unlawful? Indeed, evil is what they have been doing. [63]

Commentary

The Moral Loss of Jews

In the first verse (62) cited above, mentioned there is the moral depravation and self-destructive attitude of many Jews so that people who know that may take a lesson and stay away from such deeds, as well as from causes that lead to them.

Though, this was generally the condition of Jews, but they also had some good people among them. It is to exclude them that the Qur'ān has used the word: كَثِيْرًا '*kathīran*' (many). As for aggression and eating of the unlawful, these are though included under the sense of 'sin', yet they have been particularly mentioned, distinctly, in order to lay emphasis on the ruin these two kinds of sins bring on one and all. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

According to Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, by using the expression 'racing towards sin' about these people, the Holy Qur'ān has given the hint that they are chronic subjects of these evil traits and the evil deeds they do have become fixed habits with them, so ingrained that they (automatically) move in that direction, even without intention.

This tells us that a good or bad deed when done many times repeatedly becomes a part and parcel of the inmost being of a person, almost a skill or drive or a fixed habit, after which, there remains no exertion or hesitation in doing what one does. This was the limit reached by Jews in pursuing their evil traits. To highlight it, it was said: يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْاِثْمِ (They race towards sin). The same thing applies to prophets and men of Allah in the case of their good traits. About them too, the Holy Qur'ān has used the same expression when it says: يُسَارِعُوْنَ فِى الْخَيْرَاتِ (They race towards good deeds - 3:114).

The Correction of Deeds

Of those who have laid the greatest emphasis on the correction of deeds, the foremost are the respected Sūfis (spiritual masters) and the men of Allah. These blessed souls have deduced from these very sayings of the Qur'ān the significant principle that all human deeds, good or bad, really come from ingrained habits and morals which ultimately become man's second nature. Therefore, when they wish to check, modify or dilute the recurrence of evil deeds, they keep these ingrained habits in sight. Thus, when they correct these, all deeds that issue forth start coming out right. Let us take the example of a person whose heart is overwhelmingly filled with greed for worldly acquisitions. As a result of this greed, he takes bribes, and devours income from interest, and if, given the opportunity, things could also reach the limits of theft and robbery. Instead of correcting these crimes separately, the spiritual masters use one masterly prescription which could cause the very foundation of these crimes razed to the ground - and that is the realization of the mortality of the world and the poisoned nature of its luxuries.

Similarly, if someone suffers from overweaning pride or arrogance or anger, and he belittles or insults others, or quarrels with friends and neighbours, these blessed souls will use the same prescription, the prescription with ingredients of the concern for the life-to-come and

the fear of ultimate accountability before Almighty Allah. Once these start remaining in sight actively, such evil behaviour patterns die out automatically.

In short, this Qur'ānic indicator tells us that man has some ingrained traits which become his second nature. If these ingrained traits tilt towards good, good deeds issue forth on their own. Similarly, if the ingrained traits are evil, man starts running towards evil deeds automatically. To achieve a total correction of behaviour, the correction of these ingrained traits is necessary.

Are religious leaders responsible for the deeds of common people?

In the second verse (63), the Shaykhs and 'Ālims among the Jews have been sternly warned as to why would they not stop such people from evil deeds. At this place in the Qur'ān, two words have been used. The first word is: رَبّٰنِيُّوْنَ '*Rabbāniyyūn*', which means Men of Allah, that is, those who are intensely devoted to acts of worship and abstain from worldly temptations - commonly known as Derwish, Pīr or Shaykh. The second word used is '*Aḥbār*.' Religious scholars among Jews are called '*Aḥbār*.' This tells us that the real responsibility of the Qur'ānic injunction of *Al-Amr bil-Ma'rūf* (bidding the Fair) and *Nahy 'Anil-Munkar* (forbidding the Unfair) falls on these two groups, that is, on the Shaykhs and 'Ālims. However, some commentators have said that '*Rabbāniyyūn*' refers to 'Ulamā who have been appointed by Government and are fully authorized, while 'Aḥbār' means the 'Ulamā in general. Taken in that sense, the responsibility of stopping people from committing crimes comes to fall on government officials and 'Ulamā both. Incidentally, this has been further clarified in some other verses as well.

For 'Ulamā and Mashāyikh - a Note of Warning

Towards the end of the verse (63), it was said: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ : "Evil is what they have been doing" - which means that it is bad habit on the part of such religious leaders known as Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā that they have abandoned their cardinal duty of bidding the Fair and forbidding the Unfair. They see people ruining themselves and they do not stand up and stop them.

Commentators with knowledge and insight have pointed out that

at the end of the first verse (62) which mentioned the errors made by common people, what was said is: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (Evil is what they have been doing). But, in the second verse (63), where the Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā have been admonished for their failing, the concluding sentence used is: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ "Evil is what they have been doing [by design]." The reason is that, according to the Arabic usage, the word, فعل :*fi'l* (that which is done) includes everything done, whether with intention, or without. But, the word, عمل :*'Amal* (that which is acted upon) is applied to what is done particularly with intention and volition. As for the words, صنع : *Sana'a* and صنعت : *San'* at (that which is done by design) are concerned, they are applied when something is done with intention, and volition or choice, and that it is done repeatedly as a matter of habit and considered purpose both. Therefore, as a result of the evil done by common people, the word chosen was *'Amal*, that is: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (Evil is what they have been doing). But, as a result of the wrong done by Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā particularly, the word selected was: صنع : *Sana'a*, as in: لَبِئْسَ مَا كَانُوْا يَصْنَعُوْنَ : "Evil is what they have been doing [by design]." In this arrangement here, there may be a hint that the attitude of such religious leaders was false because they knew that if they were to stop their people, they would listen to them and, it was likely, that they would abstain from evil deeds. Yet, such is their greed for whatever offerings they may get from them, or such is their fear of losing the faith of their clients, that their hearts are not moved enough to stand up to defend and uphold the truth. This failing of theirs is far too grave than the evil doings of those evil doers.

The outcome is : If the people of a country get involved in sins and crimes, and their religious leaders know that they will listen and abstain if asked to stop, then, under such a condition, if they do not try to stop the flood of sins and crimes because of temptation, fear or apathy, their crime is more grave than the crime of real criminals and sinners.

Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ had said that a stronger warning for Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā does not appear anywhere in the entire Qur'ān other than the one in this verse. The recognized authority in Tafsīr, Ḍaḥḥāk has said: In my view, this is the most frightening *Āyah* for Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā. (Ibn Jarīr & Ibn Kathīr)

The reason is that in the light of this verse, the failing of religious

leaders gets to be rated as far more serious than the actual crime committed by thiefs and robbers and sinners (Refuge with Allah). However, it should be borne in mind that this stern warning stands operative in the situation when the Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā are reasonably certain that their appeal will be heard and accepted. But, under other conditions when prevailing trends or corresponding experience create a stronger likelihood that nobody is going to listen to them, rather, they may even have to face harm or hurt in doing so, the command is that their responsibility, no doubt, stands dropped, but, the conduct which still remains better and higher is that they should - whether heard or negated - go on doing their duty without bothering about any blame thrown or pain caused. This approach was identified earlier as well in verse 54 which highlighted one of the qualities of the Mujāhidīn in the way of Allah by saying: وَلَا يَخَافُونَ لَوْمَةَ لَآئِمٍ that is, they are not afraid of any blame thrown at them by those who would blame anyone who speaks the truth.

It is useful to sum up the main elements of our discussion before we part with it by saying that Mashāyikh and 'Ulama, rather, all Muslims, once they know something to be sinful or against law, are duty-bound to check, stop or prohibit sin and crime, to the best of their ability - with their own hands or word of mouth or, at the least, with distaste of the heart or dislike of the attitude - of course, subject to the condition that the occasion lends to the possibility and stronger probability that they will be heard and their call will be entertained. But, should there be an occasion where stronger probability exists that they will not be heard or they will be subjected to hostility against them, then, that will be a different condition in which it will no more be obligatory on them that they must prohibit and stop people - but, it shall still remain the better and the higher form of conduct. All these details about the well known Qur'ānic maxim of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair have been deduced from Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth*. We can say that, by placing the responsibility - of personally doing what is right and good, avoiding what is not, and inviting others too to do good and shun evil, - on Muslims at large, and on Mashāyikh and 'Ulamā in particular, Islam has given to the world a priceless principle of peace which, if practiced, could help nations after nations become easily cleansed of all sorts of evils which afflict them.

The Method of Community Correction

As long as Muslims adhered to this principle right through the early and later centuries of Islam, they held a position of universal distinction in terms of knowledge, deed, morals and character. Once Muslims ignored this duty, started taking the prevention of crime as the sole responsibility of the government and its law-enforcing agencies and withdrew from their role in it, the result that came out was no secret. It is there for everyone to see. Here you have a father, a mother, the whole family, all religiously observing and fully adhering to the Sharī'ah. But, their children and their family circle are different, almost their reverse. They think and feel otherwise. They do things differently. It is for this reason that the mission of Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair has been particularly stressed upon in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as the surest method of any collective reform in the Muslim Ummah. The Holy Qur'ān has identified this mission as a unique distinction of the Ummah of the Prophet of Islam ﷺ. And it has also declared that any contravention of this rule shall be a grave sin and a certain cause of punishment. In *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has said: When sins are committed among a people and there lives someone who does not stop them, then, not far is the likelihood that Allah sends a punishment to fall on all of them. (Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Warning against Not hating Sins

Mālik ibn Dīnār says: Allah asked his angels to destroy a certain town. The angels said that there lived in that town a devoted servant of His busy praying to Him. Came the command: Let him too taste the punishment because he never showed his anger against people disobeying Us and committing sins openly, not even with a sign of it on his face.

To Sayyidnā Yūsha' ibn Nūn عليه السلام, (Joshua) the Israelite prophet, Allah Almighty revealed that one hundred thousand of his people will be destroyed by a punishment. Of them, forty thousand were righteous and sixty thousand, evil. Sayyidnā Yūsha' said: O Lord, the ruin of the evil is obvious but why the good ones? It was said: The good ones had friendly relations with the bad ones. Together, they ate and drank and enjoyed life and never frowned on people sinning and disobeying their Creator. (Details of all these narrations can be seen in Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Verses 64 - 67

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللّٰهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ ط غُلَّتْ اَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا
قَالُوا ۘ بَلْ يَدٰهُ مَبْسُوطَتٰنِ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَآءُ ط وَلَيَزِيدَنَّ كَثِيرًا
مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَّكُفْرًا ط وَ اَلْقَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ
الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ ط كُلَّمَآ اَوْقَدُوا نَارًا
لِّلْحَرْبِ اَطْفَاَهَا اللّٰهُ ۙ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْاَرْضِ فَسَادًا ط وَاللّٰهُ
لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّ اَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ اٰمَنُوا وَاتَّقَوْا
لَكَفَّرْنَا عَنْهُمْ سَيِّاٰتِهِمْ وَلَاَدْخَلْنٰهُمْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٦٥﴾ وَلَوْ
اَنَّهُمْ اَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمْ
لَاَكَلُوا مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِهِمْ ط مِنْهُمْ اُمَّةٌ مُّقْتَصِدَةٌ ط
وَكَثِيرٌ مِّنْهُمْ سَآءَ مَا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ يٰاَيُّهَا الرَّسُولُ بَلِّغْ مَآ
اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ ط وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسٰلَتَهُ ط وَاللّٰهُ
يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ ط اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْكٰفِرِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾

And the Jews said, "Allah's hand is fettered." Fettered are their own hands, and cursed are they for what they said. In fact, His hands are well-extended. He gives as He wills. And what has been sent down to you from your Lord shall certainly increase many of them in rebellion and disbelief. And We have put enmity and hatred amongst them lasting to the Day of Doom. Whenever they lit the flame of war, Allah puts it out. And they run about on the earth spreading mischief. And Allah does not like the mischief-makers. [64]

And if the People of the Book had believed and feared, We would have written off their evil deeds and would have surely admitted them to the Gardens of Bliss. [65] **And if they had upheld the Torah and the Injil and what had been sent down to them from their Lord, they would have surely had plenty to eat from above them and from beneath them. Among them are moderate**

people. As for most of them, evil is what they do. [66]

O Messenger, convey all that has been sent down to you from your Lord. And if you do not, then, you have not conveyed His message (at all). And Allah shall protect you from the people. Surely, Allah does not take the disbelieving people to the right path. [67]

Sequence

Some conditions of the Jews were mentioned in the previous verses. More particular ones appear in the verses cited above, specially the ones identified with Nabbāsh son of Qays and Fenḥās, the chief of the Jewish tribe of Qaiynuqā' who uttered words of affront with reference to Almighty Allah, the description of which follows. Thereupon, the opening verse was revealed. (As in *Al-Lubāb*, from Sayyidnā ibn 'Abbās narrated by Al-Tabarānī and Abū Al-Shaykh)

Commentary

The first verse begins with the words: وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ (And the Jews said). It mentions what was a grave offence and an utterly undignified remark for any human being to make. They were wretched enough to (God forbid) say that Allah's hand is tied up.

The background in which this was said was that Allah Almighty had given to the Jews of Madīnah extended means and money. But, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم came to Madīnah, they heard the call of Islam, yet they remained unmoved because they were more interested in holding on to their communal hegemony and the money they received through offerings based on their self-perpetuating customs. So, they turned against what was the call of truth and took a hostile stand against the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم himself. Then, as a punishment of this behaviour of theirs, Almighty Allah turned their affluent material circumstances into what was materially straightened for them - and they faced poverty. Thereupon, all frustrated and off-guard, they started uttering words to the effect that (God forbid) the Divine treasure seems to be running short or, perhaps, Allah has chosen to become miserly. It was in answer to them that it was said in this verse that the hands to be tied up will be their own hands who are saying what they are saying and cursed they shall be when punishment visits them in the Hereafter, and in the present world as well,

when it comes to them in the form of disgrace. As for the hands of Allah, they are always open and well-extended, and His generosity has been there since ever and shall remain for ever. But, He Himself is Independent, free of need, yet the master of all means. Then, along with this, He is Wise too. He gives and gives in His Wisdom. Means are extended for whom He wills in His Wisdom and means are straightened for whom He wills in His Wisdom.

After that, it was said that the people the Prophet of Islam is dealing with are contumacious people as they refuse to benefit from the open and clear words of the Qur'ān revealed to him, instead of which, their disbelief in and denial of the truth keeps getting more hardened. So, it is to keep Muslims safe from their evil designs that Allah has caused differences to crop up within their own sects because of which they would neither dare fight an open war nor would any conspiracy by them succeed. The failure to wage an open war has been mentioned in : كُلَّمَآ أَوْقَدُوا نَارًا لِّلْحَرْبِ أَطْفَأَهَا اللَّهُ (Whenever they lit the flames of war, Allah puts it out) while the failure to hatch sinster conspiracies has been pointed out in: يَسْعَوْنَ فِى الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا (And they run about on the earth spreading mischief).

Full obedience to the Divine Commands brings Blessings in This World Too

In verse 65, the Jews have been admonished that the people of the Torah and Injīl have not derived any benefit from the guidance given therein nor from the teachings of the blessed prophets. Once involved in worldly greed, they ignored what was not to be ignored. As a result, they ran into straightened circumstances right here in this world as well. But, if they were to take to the ways of faith and godliness even now, Allah could forgive them their past sins and admit them to Gardens full of bliss.

How are Divine Commands carried out in Full?

Mentioned in verse 66 which begins with the words: وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ أَقَامُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ (And if they had upheld the Torah ...), are some details of the same faith and godliness for which worldly blessings have been promised in the previous verse (65). The detail is that they should, uphold the Torah, the Injīl and the Holy Qur'ān revealed after them. The word used here does not refer to 'acting in accordance with these books'. Instead

of that, the word placed here is '*Iqāmah*' which means to establish, and to make something stand upright and straight. It signifies that their teachings can be carried out fully and correctly only when there is no increase or decrease or shortcoming in them. What is meant to stand straight must stand perfectly straight - established, not tilting.

The essence of the verse is that if the Jews were to believe in the guidance of the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān, even today, and carry out their instructions fully, without failing to act properly, nor opting for excess and transgression by equating self-innovated things with established religion, then, they shall deserve the promised blessings of the Hereafter, and the doors of sustenance will be thrown open for them in the present world as well. It will come from above and it will come from beneath. 'Above' and 'beneath,' as obvious, mean sustenance which will be available easily and constantly. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

It will be noticed that the earlier verse (65) promised blessings only in the Hereafter. The present verse (66) extends the promise to cover worldly comforts as well. The reason for this may perhaps be that the Jews had taken to malpractices, particularly the practice of altering and distorting Scriptures because of their taste for the temporal and their insatiable greed for money. This became their main hurdle which had stopped them from obeying the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam despite that they had seen very clear signs of their veracity. They were scared at the idea that by becoming Muslims, their leadership role in the community will be all over. Also gone will be the offerings and gifts which they received as religious high-priests. It was to remove this kind of doubt or apprehension that Almighty Allah promised to them that if they take to believing truly and acting righteously, nothing will be decreased from their worldly wealth and comfort which would, rather, be increased.

Answer to a Doubt

Details given above also show that this particular promise was made to Jews who were present during the time of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and were his direct addressees. If they had obeyed the command given to them, they would have had all sorts of blessings in the mortal world as well. So, those who took to the message of faith and good deed, they had these blessings in full - like Najāshī (Negus)

the King of Ethiopea and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām رضی اللہ عنہ. However, it is not necessary that for one who abides by faith and good deed, sustenance will be extended as a rule and, vice versa, for one who does not, sustenance will be straightened as a rule. The reason is that, at this place, the purpose is not to describe a general rule. This is a promise made to a particular group under particular conditions.

However, as far as the standard or general rule regarding faith and good deeds is concerned, the promise of the blessing of good and pure life is universal - but, that could either take the form of extended means of sustenance, or means which are outwardly constricted, as it has been with the blessed prophets and men of Allah not all of whom had extended sustenance all the time, but they all did have the purest of the pure life.

Justice was served when in the last verse (67), it was also added that the evil doings of Jews mentioned in the text do not apply to all Jews. Among them there were moderate people, people who were on the right path. But, the majority was evil doing. 'People on the right path' denotes people who were first Jews and Christians, then believed in the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and entered the fold of Islam.

Emphasis on *Tablīgh* and Comfort for the Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم

In the present verses as well as throughout the previous two sections, there has been a continued description of the crookedness, waywardness, obstinacy and anti-Islam mechanizations of Jews and Christians. One natural effect it could have on the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was that he, being human, could feel disappointed or compelled by circumstances and, as a result of which, the process of *Tablīgh* or the very mission of prophethood might slow down or left lacking somewhere. The second effect could be that in the event he elected to devote single-mindedly to his call and mission as a prophet without caring for any hostility, enmity, harm or hurt, there was every likelihood that it could result in the worst of hardships at the hands of his adversaries. Therefore, in the last verse (67), the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was, on the one hand, emphatically commanded to convey everything revealed to him by Allah, all of it, without any hesitation, to the people. That someone likes or dislikes it, takes or rejects it, should not

worry him in his mission. Then, on the other hand, by giving the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم the good news that all those disbelievers will be unable to bring any harm to him in his mission as a prophet for Allah will Himself protect him.

The sentence: وَإِنْ لَّمْ تَفْعَلْ فَمَا بَلَّغْتَ رِسٰلَتَهٗ : 'And if you do not, then, you have not conveyed His message [at all]' in this verse is worth pondering. This address to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم here means that if he failed to convey even one Divine command to the Muslim *Ummah*, he would not find himself absolved of the responsibility of prophethood. This was the reason why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم strived with his full courage and strength all his life to fulfill this heavy obligation placed on his shoulders. Muslims are familiar with the renowned *Khuṭbah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during his Last Ḥajj, the great address which was not only the Constitution of Islam but also the last will and testament of an elementally lenient and merciful prophet who was far more affectionate and caring than a father and mother could ever be.

The parting will of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the occasion of the Last Ḥajj

In this *Khutbah* before a huge gathering of his noble *Ṣaḥābah*, after he had given important instructions to them, he asked the audience: أَلَا هَلْ بَلَّغْتُ (Listen: Have I conveyed your religion to you?). The *Ṣaḥābah* confirmed that he certainly had. Thereupon, he said: You be a witness on this. And along with it, he also said: فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ (that is, those present in this gathering should convey my message to those who are not here). Included among the absent are those who were present in the world at that time but were not present in the gathering itself - and also included are those who were yet to be born. The method of conveying the message to them was the spreading of the knowledge of the *Dīn* of Allah, a duty which was fulfilled by great efforts made by the *Ṣaḥābah* and the *Tābi'īn*.

It was under the direct influence of this parting advice that the noble Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all, took the words and deeds of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as a weighty trust of Allah and did their best to ensure that not a single sentence uttered by his blessed tongue should remain unconveyed to his *Ummah*. This holds

true under all normal conditions. However, if someone did not narrate a particular *Ḥadīth* before people for a special reason or compulsion, he made it a point to do that before his death by reciting it to at least some people around so that they could be relieved of the burden of trust they have been carrying on their shoulders. A similar event about a *Ḥadīth* from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh رضى الله عنه has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, that is, اخبر به معاذ عند موته تاثما that is, Sayyidnā Mu'ādh recited this *Ḥadīth* at the time of his death so that he would not become a sinner because of his failure to convey this trust with him to others.

The Protection of Allah

In the second sentence of the last verse: وَاللّٰهُ يَعْصِمُكَ مِنَ النَّاسِ (And Allah shall protect you from the people), good news has been given to him that his enemies would remain unable to do anything harmful against him despite their myriad demonstrations of animosity.

It appears in *Ḥadīth* that, before the revelation of this verse, some Companions generally used to stay around him in order to protect him. They guarded him wherever he was, in the city or in travel. After the revelation of this verse, he relieved them all as no security arrangements were needed anymore. Allah had Himself taken that responsibility.

In a *Ḥadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā Ḥasan, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: When I was charged with the duty of conveying the message of Allah as His prophet, the charge appeared to be very frightening because people around me were bound to falsify and oppose me. Then, as this verse was revealed, I was at peace. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

Thus, after the revelation of this verse, no one dared to harm the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم during his efforts to spread the message of Islam as a prophet of Allah. Any casual injury received in *Jihād* battles is not contrary to this.

Verses 68 - 69

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَسْتُمْ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ حَتّٰى تُقِيْمُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ وَ
الْاِنْجِيْلَ وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ ۭ وَلَيَزِيْدَنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ مَّآ

أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكَ مِن رَّبِّكَ طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ۖ فَلَا تَأْسَ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئُونَ وَالنَّصَارَىٰ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, you have nothing to stand unless you uphold the Torah and the Injīl and what has been sent down to you from your Lord." And what has been sent down to you from your Lord will certainly increase many of them in rebellion and disbelief. So, do not grieve over the disbelieving people. [68]

Surely, those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians - whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, and acts righteously, shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve. [69]

Sequence

Earlier, the people of the Book were persuaded to embrace Islam. Mentioned now is the futility of their current approach which they claimed to be the God's truth while it was unworkable in the sight of Allah, insufficient for salvation and dependant on Islam as the only source of salvation. Then, as an antidote to their insistence on remaining disbelievers after being warned, there are words of comfort for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. The mention of *Tablīgh* of *Dīn* had appeared in between as based on particular need and congruity.

Commentary

Follow the Divine Sharī'ah : Instruction for the people of the Book

In the first verse (68), the people of the Book, that is, the Jews and Christians were instructed to follow the Divine Sharī'ah by making it clear that they would be reduced to nothing if they chose not to abide by the injunctions of the Sharī'ah. In other words, if they do not adhere to the Sharī'ah of Islam, all their achievements shall stand wasted. To them Allah had given the privelege of being the progeny of prophets. Then, they had the intellectual excellence of the Torah and the Injīl as well. Added to this was the presence of many men of Allah

among them who went through strenuous spiritual exertions in their search for truth. But, for all this to be valid and weighty the one binding condition was that they should follow the Divine Sharī'ah. Without it, no geneological superiority will work, nor would their intellectual excellence or their spiritual strivings become the means of their salvation.

This statement provides for Muslims too the crucial guidance that there is no way of Dervishes or path of spiritual realization (*Sulūk* & *Ṭarīqat*) or repeated strivings to achieve spiritual goals (*Mujāhadah* and *Riyāḍāt*) or extra-sensory spiritual illumination (*Kashf*) or having visitations of inspiration (*Ilhām*) which can become the source of spiritual achievement or salvation in the sight of Allah unless there is full adherence to the Sharī'ah.

To prove one's obedience to the Divine Sharī'ah, the instruction given in this verse is to follow three things. These are the Torah and Injīl which had been revealed earlier for the Jews and Christians while the third one is: وَمَآ أُنۡزِلَ إِلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ , that is, what has been revealed to you from your Lord.

According to the consensus of the majority of commentators, the Ṣaḥābah and the Tābi'īn, it means the Holy Qur'ān which was sent for the universal community of inviters to faith - including the Jews and Christians - through the (midmost) medium of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Therefore, the verse comes to mean 'unless you act in accordance with the injunctions brought by the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān - correctly, fully and totally - no lineal or intellectual excellence of yours shall be valid or acceptable with Allah.'

At this point one may wonder why, in this verse, rather than mentioning Qur'ān by its brief name, as was done with the Torah and the Injīl, a long sentence : وَمَآ أُنۡزِلَ إِلَيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡ رَّبِّكُمۡ (and what has been revealed to you from your Lord) has been used. What is the wisdom behind it? It is possible that it may be carrying a hint to what was said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in which he disclosed that the way he was given the Qur'ān which is a treasure of knowledge and wisdom, also given to him were other sources of knowledge and insight, which could be called, in a certain aspect, the explication of the Holy Qur'ān as well. The words of the *Ḥadīth* are:

الا انّی اوتیت القران ومثله معه الا یوشك رجل شبعان علی اریکته یقول علیکم بهذا القران فما وجدتم فیه من حلال فأحلوه وما وجدتم فیه من حرام فحرموه وان ماحرم رسول الله (صلی الله علیه وسلم) کما حرم الله .

(ابوداؤد ، ابن ماجه، دارمی وغیرہا)

Remember! I have been given the Qur'ān and, with it, (many fields of knowledge) like it - lest, in times to come, some sated man reclining on his couch were to say: For you this Qur'ān is sufficient - what you find Ḥalāl in it, take that as Ḥalāl; and what you find Ḥarām in it, take that as Ḥarām - although, what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ has declared to be Ḥarām is like what Allah has declared to be Ḥarām. (Abū Dāwūd, Ibn Mājah, Dārimī & others)

Three Kinds of *Aḥkām*

The Qur'ān itself is a testimony of this subject. It says: وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوْحٰى which means that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم does not say anything on his own - whatever he says is all revealed to him from Almighty Allah; and under conditions when he says something based on his *Ijtihād* (fully deliberated judgement) and *Qiyās* (analogical deduction) - following which he receives no guidance contrary to it - then, consequently, that *Qiyās* and *Ijtihād* too hold the same legal force as that of an injunction revealed through *Waḥy*.

In a nutshell, we can say that, out of the injunctions (*Aḥkām*) given to the *Ummah* by the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم, first come those which have been mentioned clearly in the Holy Qur'ān. Then, there are those which have not been mentioned in the Qur'ān clearly, instead of which, they were revealed to the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم through a separate *Waḥy* (*Waḥy Ghayr Matlū*: Revelation not recited). Thirdly, the command which he gave as based on his *Ijtihād* and *Qiyās* - following which no command was revealed by Almighty Allah - then, that too takes the legal force of a revealed injunction. It is obligatory to follow all these three kinds of injunctions. They are included within the purview of : وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (What has been revealed to you from your Lord).

It is also possible that the use of the longer sentence: وَمَآ أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (and what has been revealed to you from your Lord) in place of the likely brief name of Qur'ān in this verse may have been preferred so as

to indicate that the following of all injunctions given in the Qur'ān or given by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is equally mandatory.

Another point worth noting in this verse is that the Jews and Christians have been asked to follow the injunctions of all three Books, that is, the Torah, the Injīl and the Qur'ān - although, some of them abrogate others. The Injīl abrogates some injunctions of the Torah and the Qur'ān abrogates many injunctions of the Torah and the Injīl. How then, could the sum of three be followed in action?

The answer is clear. Since every incoming Book changed some injunctions of the outgoing Book, it becomes obvious that following the replaced modality, in itself, amounts to acting in accordance with both Books. Following and acting in accordance with abrogated injunctions is against the requirement of both Books.

Allah consoles His Prophet

To console the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it was said at the end that there will be many among the people of the Book who would fail to benefit by the Divine magnanimity shown to them. They may even react adversely by increasing the tempo of their disbelief and hostility. Let this be no cause of grief to him, nor should he have any sympathetic concern for them.

Salvation promised for Four Communities having faith and good deeds

In the second verse (69), Allah Almighty addresses four traditional religious communities, pursuades them to have faith and act righteously whereupon He promises salvation for them. The first of those are: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا (those who believe) that is, the Muslims. Secondly : اَلَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْا (and those who are Jews); thirdly : صٰبِئُوْنَ (the Sabians); and fourthly : نَصٰرٰى (the Christians). Three of these Communities - Muslims, Jews and Christians - are well-known and found in most parts of the world. Any community having the name Sabian does not exist today. Therefore, scholarly opinion varies as to their exact identity. Quoting Qatādah, the Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr has reported that Sabians were people who worshipped angels, offered prayers contra-oriented to the Qiblah and recited the Scripture, Zabūr (revealed to Sayyidnā Dāwūd) عليه السلام.

The context of the Qur'ān seems to support it as the four Scriptures mentioned in the Qur'ān are Torah, Zabūr, Injīl and Qur'ān. Thus, named here are the believers in these four Books.

Another verse on the same subject, almost in the same words, has appeared in the seventh Section of Sūrah al-Baqarah:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصٰرٰى وَالصّٰبِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ
وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ،

> Surely, those who believed, and those who are Jews, and Christians, and the Sabians - whoever believes in Allah and in the Last Day, and does good deeds - they have their reward with their Lord. And there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve. (2: 62)

Other than the place-oriented transposition of some words, there is no difference between them.

With Allah, Distinction Depends on Righteous Deeds

The gist of both these verses is that distinctions of lineage, homeland, and nationality do not matter in the sight of Allah. Anyone who takes to total obedience, faith and good deeds as a way of life - no matter what he has been before - shall find himself acceptable with Allah and his devotion will bring the best of appreciation from his Creator. And it is obvious that total obedience after the revelation of the Qur'ān depends on being a Muslim - because, there are instructions to this effect in the past Scriptures of the Torah and the Injīl as well, while the Qur'ān itself was revealed for this particular purpose. Therefore, after the revelation of the Qur'ān and the appearance of the Last among Prophets صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, it cannot be correct - without believing in the Qur'ān and having faith in the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم - to follow either the Torah or the Injīl or the Zabūr. Thus, these verses would mean that whoever from among these communities becomes Muslim shall become deserving of salvation and reward in the *Ākhirah* (Ḥereafter). Provided right here is the answer to the doubt as to what would happen to all their dark doings of sin and disobedience and disbelief and anti-Islam and anti-Muslim mechanizations once they have become Muslims? The disarming answer is: All past sins and shortcomings will stand forgiven and in the life-to-come, they shall have no

fear or grief.

A surface view of the subject may suggest to someone that this should not be the place to mention Muslims because they are - in their faith and through their obedience - at the stage desired in the verse. In other words, the occasion here calls for the mention of only those who are supposed to be pursuaded to enter the fold of Islam. But, what we have here is a special mode of eloquence employed by the Qur'ān. It is like the law promulgated by the highest imaginable authority saying that it is for everyone, in favour or in opposition, bringing reward for the law-abiding and punishment for the law-breaking. It is obvious that those in favour are already obedient. The purpose is to make those in the opposing camp hear it. The particular element of wisdom behind mentioning those already in favour is that they are being told here that they are being appreciated not because of any personal or group excellence of theirs but simply because of their quality of obedience to their Creator. If the dissenter in the opposing camp were to take to the path of obedience to his Creator, he too will deserve the same grace and reward.

There is No Salvation (*Najāt*) without Belief in Prophethood (*'Īmān bir-Risālat*)

The set of instructions given in the address to these four Traditional Religious Communities is divided in three parts: (a) *'Īmān bil-lāh* : Belief in Allah (b) *'Īmān bil-yowmil-ākhir* : Belief in the Last Day (c) and *Al-'Amalus-Sāliḥ* : Good deeds.

It is obvious that the intention in this verse is not to give the entire details of Islam's articles of faith, nor is there any occasion for it. By mentioning some basic beliefs of Islam here, the aim is to point out to all Islamic beliefs, and to invite people to them - nor is it something so necessary that whenever *'Īmān* or faith is mentioned in a verse, all details about it should also be mentioned right there. Therefore, the absence of a clearly emphasized mention of the faith in the Messenger or Prophet at this place should have not given anyone having the least commonsense and justice the room to entertain any doubt - specially, when the whole Qur'ān and hundreds of its verses are brimming with clear statements about belief in the *Risālah*. Present there are loud and clear assertions that there is no *Najat* (salvation) without believ-

ing in the *Rasūl* (Messenger of Allah) and the sayings of the *Rasūl* fully and completely, and that no belief and action is acceptable or valid without it. But, a group of deviators, which insists on thrusting its repugnant ideas in the Qur'ān somehow, has come up with a new theory based on the absence of an explicit mention of prophethood in this verse - which is absolutely contrary to so many open assertions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. They theorize that every person, despite his religion, a Jew or Christian, even an idol-worshipping Hindu could deserve salvation in the Hereafter - if he believes only in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds. For final salvation (as they would prefer) entry in Islam is not necessary. (*Na'ūdhu-bil-lāh* : Refuge with Allah!)

People whom Allah has blessed with the Taufīq of reciting the Qur'ān and having true faith in it would not need some major knowledge or insight to help them remove this doubt which even they could do through these very clear statements. Even readers of the Qur'ān with the help of authentic translations could understand the falsity of this kind of theorizing. Some verses are being given here as an example.

The place where the Holy Qur'ān has described the articles of faith (*'Īmān*) in details appears at the end of Sūrah al-Baqarah as follows:

كُلٌّ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتِهٖ وَكُتُبِهٖ وَرُسُلِهٖ لَانُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ اَحَدٍ مِّنْ رُّسُلِهٖ

> ... All have believed in Allah, and His angels, and His Books, and His Messengers. (in a way that) "We make no difference between any of His Messengers," and they have said ... (2:285).

Within the details of *'Īmān* (faith) described clearly in this verse, it has also been clarified that believing in any one or some Messengers is absolutely insufficient for salvation. Instead of that, believing in all Messengers is a binding condition. If anyone does not believe even in one single Messenger, his or her *'Īmān* shall not be valid and acceptable in the sight of Allah.

At another place, it is said:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْفُرُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ وَيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّفَرِّقُوْا بَيْنَ اللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ
نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَّيُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذُوْا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ سَبِيْلًا اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ

الْكٰفِرُوْنَ حَقًّا ،

> Surely those who disbelieve in Allah and His Messengers, and wish to make division between Allah and His Messengers, and say, "We believe in some, and disbelieve in some" and wish to take a way in between that. Those are the disbelievers in reality ... (4:151).

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

لَوْكَانَ مُوْسٰى حَيًّا لَمَا وَسِعَهٗ اِلَّا اتِّبَاعِىْ

> Had Mūsā عليه السلام been alive, he would have had no choice but to follow me.

Now, if someone were to say: 'Let the followers of every religion keep acting according to their respective religions. Thus, they can find Paradise and achieve salvation in the Hereafter without having to believe in the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and without having to become Muslims!' - this would, then, be a flagrant disregard of the verses cited above.

In addition to that, if every religion or community is something acting according to which in every age is sufficient for ultimate success and salvation, then, the coming of the Last among Prophets and the revelation of the Qur'ān itself becomes meaningless. The sending of one Sharī'ah after the other also becomes redundant. The first Messenger would have brought one Sharī'ah and one Book. That would have been sufficient. What need was there to send other Messengers, Sharī'ahs and Books? At the most, sufficient would have been the presence of people who would have preserved the Sharī'ah and the Book, practiced it themselves and pursuaded others to do the same - as has been the duty of the 'Ulamā of every community. This, then, would be a situation in which the words of the Qur'ān: لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَّمِنْهَاجًا (For each of you We have made a way and a method - 5:48) will lose their meaning.

Is it not that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم carried out the mission of *Jihād* against Jews and Christians, and others, those who did not believe in him and in the Book of Allah revealed to him, even fought against them on battlefields? What justification would remain for that? And if, for a human being to be a true believer acceptable with

Allah, having faith only in Allah and the Last Day should be taken as sufficient, why then, would Iblīs (Satan) be cursed? Did he not believe in Allah? Or, was he a denier of the Last Day? Was he not the one who, even in his fit of anger, by saying: إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ (Till the Day, the [dead] are raised - 34:79), confirmed his faith in the Last Day?

The truth of the matter is that this error is the product of the notion that religion can be given as a gift on a silver plate as done in marriages. Seen in modern and international context, religion can be used to develop bonds of relationship with other nations - although, the Holy Qur'ān has said very openly and clearly that we should have our relations with non-Muslims based on tolerance, sympathy, favour, charity, mercy and things like that, but this should be done by ensuring that the limits of religion are not crossed and that its frontiers remain fully guarded.

If, in the verse under reference, let us suppose, there was no mention of the faith in prophethood, then, other verses quoted above which command it emphatically, would have been sufficient. But, a closer look at this verse itself will show a distinct hint towards belief in prophethood because, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, only that *'Īmān bil-lāh* (belief in Allah) is valid, in which there is belief in everything told by Allah. The Qur'ān has made its terminology very clear in the following words:

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنتُم بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوا

So, if they (the Companions) believe in the like of what you (the Prophet ﷺ) believe in, they have certainly found the right path - 2:137.

It means that the kind of *'Īmān* the noble Ṣaḥābah had is the only *'Īmān* which deserves to be called *'Īmān bil-lāh*. And it is obvious that *'Īmān bir-rasūl* was a great pillar of the edifice of their *'Īmān*. Therefore, the words: مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللهِ (whoever believes in Allah) are inclusive of the belief in the Messenger of Allah.

Verses 70 - 71

لَقَدْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَاقَ بَنِي إِسْرَاءِيلَ وَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ رُسُلًا ۖ كُلَّمَا

جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ بِمَا لَا تَهْوَىٰ أَنفُسُهُمْ فَرِيقًا كَذَّبُوا وَفَرِيقًا

يَقْتُلُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ وَحَسِبُوْٓا اَلَّا تَكُوْنَ فِتْنَةٌ فَعَمُوْا وَصَمُّوْا ثُمَّ
تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ عَمُوْا وَصَمُّوْا كَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللّٰهُ بَصِيْرٌۢ
بِمَا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾

Certainly We took a pledge from the Banī Isrā'īl and sent Messengers to them. Whenever a Messenger came to them with what did not meet their desires, they falsified some and started killing others. [70] **And they thought that no harm would follow. Therefore, they turned blind and deaf. Then, Allah accepted their repentance, but again they turned blind and deaf, many of them. And Allah is watchful of what they do.** [71]

Commentary

This is an account of how the Bani Isrā'īl kept breaking the pledge taken from them. As said in verse 70, whenever their Messenger brought a command which did not suit their fancy, they would break their pledge and go about betraying Allah to the limit that they would falsify His Messengers, even kill some of them. They were commanded 'to believe in Allah and act righteously.' But, this was what they did in response. As for the other part of the command - 'Belief in the Last Day' - their behaviour was equally reckless. After having committed acts so oppressive, they became totally carefree as if they would not have to pay for what they had done and as if the consequences of their injustice and rebellion will never come out in the open. Under this false impression, they became totally blind and deaf to Divine signs and words. They went on doing what should have not been done. So much so that they killed some prophets and put some others behind bars. Finally, Almighty Allah imposed on them the mastery of Nebuchadnezzar (King of Babylonia, 605-562 B.C., who took them as slaves to Babylon - Old Testament, book of Daniel). When, after a long time, they were sent back to Jerusalem from Babylon through help from some Persian kings who secured their release from disgrace under Nebuchadnezzar, they repented and turned to making amends. Allah relented and accepted their repentance. But, with the passage of some time, they went back to their old practices which made them so blind and deaf once again that they dared killing Sayyidnā Zakarīyah

(Zechariah) and Sayyidnā Yaḥyā (John) and were all set to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā (Jesus). (Tafsīr Usmanī - Notes)

Verses 72 - 76

لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ط وَقَالَ
الْمَسِيْحُ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبَّكُمْ ط اِنَّهٗ مَنْ
يُّشْرِكْ بِاللّٰهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَ مَاْوٰىهُ النَّارُ ط وَمَا
لِلظّٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ ﴿٧٢﴾ لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ م وَمَا مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِلَّآ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ ط وَاِنْ لَّمْ يَنْتَهُوْا عَمَّا
يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَيَمَسَّنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ اَفَلَا
يَتُوْبُوْنَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَ يَسْتَغْفِرُوْنَهٗ ط وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٧٤﴾ مَا
الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اِلَّا رَسُوْلٌ ج قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ ط وَاُمُّهٗ
صِدِّيْقَةٌ ط كَانَا يَاْكُلٰنِ الطَّعَامَ ط اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُبَيِّنُ لَهُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ
انْظُرْ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٧٥﴾ قُلْ اَتَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا
يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا نَفْعًا ط وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿٧٦﴾

Surely, they became disbelievers who said, "Allah is exactly the Masīḥ son of Maryam (Jesus son of Mary)" while the Masīḥ had said, "O children of Isrā'īl, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." The fact is, whoever ascribes any partner to Allah, to him Allah has prohibited the *Jannah* (the Paradise) and their shelter is the Fire. And for the unjust there are no supporters. [72]

Surely, they became disbelievers who said, "Allah is the third of the three" while there is no god but One God. And if they do not desist from what they say, a painful punishment shall certainly befall the disbelievers among them. [73] **Why then do they not turn to Allah in repentance and seek His forgiveness when Allah is most forgiving, very merciful?** [74]

The Masīḥ, son of Maryam, is no more than a Messenger. There have been messengers before him. And his

mother is very truthful. Look how We explain signs to them, then see how far they are turned away. [75]

Say, "Do you worship, besides Allah, what has no power to do you harm or bring you benefit?" And Allah is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. [76]

Commentary

1. The words : إِنَّ اللّٰهَ ثَالِثُ ثَلٰثَةٍ in verse 72, translated here literally as 'Allah is the third of the three,' refers to Sayyidnā Masīḥ (Jesus Christ), *Rūḥul-Quds* (The Holy Spirit) and Allah, or to Masih, Maryam (Mary) and Allah - with all three taken as God (Refuge with Allah). Thus, Allah becomes a one-third partner with them, then all three of them become one, and that one is three. This unity in trinity, with three persons in one godhead, is the common belief of Christians. They explain this belief which is supported by neither reason nor revelation with a language that is kept circuitous and ambiguous. When not understood, they declare it to be reality beyond comprehension. (Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmanī - Notes)

2. In verse 75, by saying: قَدْخَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ الرُّسُلُ (There have been messengers before him), the assigning of godhood to Sayyidnā Masīḥ عليه السلام has been refuted. Prophets came to this world. They completed their mission. Then, they were gone. They were not eternal which is the mark of godhood. Similarly, Sayyidnā Masīḥ, may peace be upon him (being human like them) was not eternal. So, he cannot be what God is.

A little reflection will show that everyone who needs to eat and drink almost depends on everything in the world. We cannot say that the earth, the air, the water, the sun and the animals are what we do not need. Look into your own self. There is that grain of food outside you, then begins its journey from the entry into the stomach to the next destination of its digestion. Think of all those factors involved and things required directly and indirectly in this complex procedure. Then, there will be a chain of effects generated through eating and no one can tell precisely how far will they go. So, by pointing out that Sayyidna Masīḥ and his pious mother used to eat, the Holy Qur'ān has referred to the endless chain of needs it entails. The argument, thus runs that Masīḥ and Maryam, may peace be upon them both, were not

free of the need for eating and drinking which is proved by observation and authentic narrations (not denied by even Christians). And anyone who is not free from the need of eating and drinking cannot be free from anything in this world. How then, a human person, who like all human beings is not free of the need to depend on the chain of causation for survival, could become God? This is a strong and clear proof which can be understood by the educated and the uneducated alike - that is, eating and drinking is contrary to godhood. Though, not eating too is not a proof in favour of godhood, otherwise all angels would become gods! (Refuge with Allah) (Tafsīr Usmānī)

3. Was Sayyidah Maryam a prophet or saint? This is a debated issue. In the present verse (75), the complimentary use of the word "*Ṣiddīqah*" (truthful) obviously seems to indicate that she was a godly person, not a *Nabiyy* (prophet) - because on a complimentary occasion, what is mentioned is the higher rank. If she had the station of prophethood, the word used for her at this place would have been "*Nabiyyah*"- but, the word used here is "*Ṣiddīqah*" which is the station of sainthood or godliness (abridged from Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

According to the majority of Muslim scholars, the station of *Nubūwwah* (prophethood) has never appeared among women. This mission has been particular with men:

وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ اِلَّا رِجَالًا نُّوْحِيْٓ اِلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى

> And We have not sent any (one) before you but men to whom We revealed from among the peoples of the towns - Sūrah Yusuf, 12 : 109. (Tafsīr Usmānī)

Verses 77 - 81

قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْٓا
اَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا وَّضَلُّوْا عَنْ
سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ ﴿۷۷﴾ لُعِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْۢ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ
عَلٰى لِسَانِ دَاوٗدَ وَعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِمَا عَصَوْا وَّكَانُوْا
يَعْتَدُوْنَ ﴿۷۸﴾ كَانُوْا لَا يَتَنَاهَوْنَ عَنْ مُّنْكَرٍ فَعَلُوْهُ ۭ لَبِئْسَ مَا

كَانُوْا يَفْعَلُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ تَرٰى كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتَوَلَّوْنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ط
لَبِئْسَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لَهُمْ اَنْفُسُهُمْ اَنْ سَخِطَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَفِى
الْعَذَابِ هُمْ خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَلَوْ كَانُوْا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالنَّبِىِّ
وَمَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْهِ مَا اتَّخَذُوْهُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ وَلٰكِنَّ كَثِيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ
فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾

Say, "O people of the Book, be not excessive in your faith unjustly, and do not follow the desires of a people who already went astray, misled many and lost the right path. [77]

On those who disbelieve from among the children of Isrā'īl was a curse pronounced by Dāwūd and 'Īsā son of Maryam. All this because they disobeyed and used to cross the limits. [78] **They did not forbid each other from an evil they committed. Indeed, evil is what they have been doing.** [79]

You see many of them take the disbelievers as friends. Indeed, evil is what their own selves have sent ahead for themselves as Allah is angry with them, and they are to remain under punishment for ever. [80]

And if they have been believing in Allah, in the prophet and in what had been sent down to him, they would have not taken them as friends, but many of them are sinners. [81]

Commentary

The Crookedness of Banī Isrā'īl : Yet Another Aspect

It will be recalled that, in previous verses, mentioned there was the contumacy of Bani Isrā'īl along with their tyranny and injustice with reference to what they did to their benefactors, the prophets sent by Allah who had come to show them the way to succeed in this life and in the life to come. But, they mistreated them, by falsifying some and killing others: فَرِيْقًا كَذَّبُوْا وَفَرِيْقًا يَّقْتُلُوْنَ (72)

The present verses expose another aspect of the crooked ways of Bani Isrā'īl. So astray were they that they, not content with one extreme mentioned above, reached for another when they committed ex-

cess in showing reverence for messengers of Allah by making them nothing short of God: لَقَدْ كَفَرَ الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ . It means that the section of people from the Bani Isrā'īl who said that Allah is exactly Jesus the son of Mary had become disbelievers. Mentioned this far is the saying of the Christians only. Elsewhere, the Jews too have been censured for the same kind of excess and error: وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُوْدُ عُزَيْرُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ وَقَالَتِ النَّصٰرَى الْمَسِيْحُ ابْنُ اللّٰهِ (And the Jews said, "Uzair (Ezra) is the son of Allah" and the Christians said, "Masīḥ (the Christ) is the son of Allah."

The word "*Ghuluww*" used at the begining of verse 77: قُلْ يٰٓاَهْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ (Say, "O people of the Book, be not excessive in your faith") means to cross limits. "*Ghuluww*" or excess in religion refers to the crossing of limits drawn by religion in matters of belief and deed. For example, there is a limit to paying homage to prophets. The farthest one can go is to take them as the best among God's creation. That is the limit. Going over and beyond this limit, calling those very prophets God or son of God is excess in matters of belief.

Banī Isrā'īl : Their Cycle of Excess and Deficiency

The behaviour of the people of the Banī Isrā'īl towards prophets and messengers of Allah had been a mixture of opposites. They could become as neglectful and irreverent as to falsify or even kill them while it would be they themselves who would stretch the limits of their exaggerated reverence for them by calling them God or son of God. This syndrome of excess and deficiency in group behaviour is a sign of ingrained brutality. There is a well-known saying among Arabs: اَلْجَاهِلُ اِمَّا مفرِطٌ اَوْمُفَرِّطٌ which means that an ignorant person never stays on moderation. He would either go for '*Ifrāṭ*' (excess) or for '*Tafrīṭ*' (deficiency). *Ifrāṭ* means to cross the limit while *Tafrīṭ* means to fall short in doing one's duty. These actions on two extremes may have come from two different groups of the Banī Isrā'īl, or it is also possible that one single group acted in two different ways with different prophets whereby some were subjected to their falsification, even killing, while some others were equated with God.

Addressing the people of the Book in this verse, the guidance given to them and their generations to come right through the Last Day, has the status of a basic principle to be kept in sight while following a religion for the slightest deviation from it makes one be lost for ever.

Therefore, let us first explain a few basic things about it.

The Method of Knowing and Reaching Allah

The most significant truth of our life is that Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* is the Creator and Master of all universes of existence and whatever they contain. He is One. To Him belongs all there is and for Him is to command. It is He alone man must obey. But man, the lump of clay come alive, is still wrapped up in layers and layers of materialism. How can he reach out to the One so pure and pristine? Or, how could he get an access to sources of His will and guidance? For this, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* has, in His grace, appointed two sources of knowledge through which man can get to know what is liked and disliked by Allah Almighty and what it is that man must do and what is it that man must avoid. The first source is that of the Books of Allah which have the status of Law and Guidance for all human beings. Then, as the second source, there are those special and welcome servants of Allah whom Allah Almighty has chosen from among human beings, and He has sent them to people as the practical models of His likes and dislikes and the practical keys to His Books. In religious terminology, they are called "*Rasūl*" (messenger) or '*Nabiy*' (prophet).

This is because a book, no matter how exhaustive, can never be sufficient for the complete grooming of man. The fact is that it takes a man to be the natural groomer and nurturer of another man. Therefore, it has been the practice of Allah that He has allowed two orders to flourish in the mission of reforming and training men in the art of living. These are: (a) The Book of Allah, and (b) The Men of Allah - included wherein are the blessed prophets, then their deputies, the 'Ulamā and the *Mashāikh*. About this order of '*Rijālul-lāh*' (men of Allah), people have been victims of excess and deficiency since ancient times. Particularly, the different sects that mushroomed in religions were all products of this error of approach through which somewhere they were inflated beyond the required limit hitting the outer frontiers of the worship of such men. At other places, they were totally ignored and bypassed by saying: 'For us, the Book of Allah is enough' (حَسْبُنَا كِتَابُ اللهِ), apparently a true declaration, but by misinterpreting it to negate the importance of prophets they made it as their motto. At one extreme a Messenger of Allah, a *Rasūl* - even *Pīrs* and *Faqīrs* - were taken

to be the knowers of the unknown and seers of the unseen, as if they were (God forbid) the very possessors of God's own attributes. People started with worshipping live *Pīrs* and landed into the worship of their graves as well. Then, there was that other extreme when even a *Rasūl* of Allah was given the status of what would be a mere courier or postman. Thus, the essential message of the verses under reference is that the offenders against the honour of prophets are no less in their disbelief than are those who raise them far above the limits set for honouring them and go about saying that they were equal to Allah. Verse 77 which says, "do not be excessive in your faith," is a preface to this very subject. It makes it very clear that *Dīn* is, in reality, the name of a few limits and restrictions. The way it is a crime to remain deficient or negligent within those limits, so it is a crime to cross and exceed them. The way it is a grave sin to reject and insult the messengers of Allah and their deputies, in the same way, it is a much graver sin to take them to be the owners of Allah's own attributes or their equal sharers with Him.

Justified Intellectual Research is no Excess

In verse 77, the word: غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ (unjustly) appears alongwith the statement: لَا تَغْلُوْا فِيْ دِيْنِكُمْ (Do not be excessive in your faith). According to investigative scholars of *Tafsīr*, this word has been used here for emphasis because an excess in religion is always unjust. The probability of its being just does not simply exist. 'Allāmah al-Zamakhsharī and others have identified two kinds of *Ghuluww* or excess at this particular place: (1) The unjust and false which has been prohibited here; (2) The just and permissible, as an example of which, he has named deep intellectual research - or as it has been the way of the scholastic theologians (*Mutakallimīn*) of Islam in matters relating to articles of faith, or that of Muslim jurists in matters relating to juristic rulings. According to him, even this is, though, *Ghuluww* (excess) but, an excess which is just and permissible - while, the considered position of the majority of scholars is that it simply does not fall within the definition of *Ghuluww* (excess). Finally, we can say that deep insight and detailed investigation in questions relating to the Qur'ān and Sunnah should remain within the limits as proved from the Holy Prophet ﷺ and from the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* - if so, that is not *Ghuluww* (excess). And what reaches the limits of *Ghuluww* is blameworthy here too.

Banī Isrā'īl Asked to Follow the Path of Moderation

Addressing the Banī Isrā'īl at the end of the verse (77), it was said: وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَاَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا that is, they should not follow the desires and whims of a people who had themselves gone astray before them, and had made others go astray as well. The reason why they fell into that error was given immediately after by saying: وَّضَلُّوْا عَنْ سَوَآءِ السَّبِيْلِ that is, these people, by moving away from the right path, had lost it. This straight path was the path of moderation between the two extremes of excess and deficiency. Thus, two things have been accomplished in this verse: It points out to the fatal error made by crossing over the norm, or lagging far behind it, and stresses upon the need to stay firm on the straight path, the ideal path of moderation.

The Sad End of Banī Isrā'īl

Mentioned in the second verse (78) is the sad end of those from the Banī Isrā'īl who were involved in this error of excess and deficiency. On them fell the curse of Allah Almighty. Firstly, it came through the tongue of Sayyidnā Dāwūd علیه السلام as a result of which they were transformed into swines. Then, this curse fell upon them through the tongue of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیه السلام the temporal effect of which was that they were transformed into monkeys. Some commentators have pointed out that the reference to the curse mentioned here as coming through only two prophets is because the context so requires. But, the fact is that the casting of curse on them began with Sayyidnā Mūsā علیه السلام and ended at the Last among Prophets صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. Thus, the curse which overtook those, who were hostile to prophets or were guilty of acting excessively by making prophets sharers in Divine attributes, was wished verbally by four prophets one after the other.

In the last two verses (80,81), the cultivation of deep friendship with disbelievers has been prohibited as its outcome is disasterous. It may also be indicative of the possibility that the deviation of Banī Isrā'īl was a result of their close friendly collaboration with disbelievers which may have affected their ways adversely and finally became the cause of their fall into the abyss.

Verses 82 - 86

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ

اَشْرَكُوْا ۚ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا
نَصٰرٰى ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَّاَنَّهُمْ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَاِذَا سَمِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ تَرٰٓى
اَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوْا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ
اٰمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَمَا لَنَا لَا نُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَمَا
جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۙ وَنَطْمَعُ اَنْ يُّدْخِلَنَا رَبُّنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ
﴿٨٤﴾ فَاَثَابَهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِمَا قَالُوْا جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ
خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ وَذٰلِكَ جَزَآءُ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا
وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

You will certainly find that the most hostile people against the believers are the Jews and the ones who ascribe partners to Allah. And you will certainly find that the closest of them in friendship with the believers are those who say, "We are Christians." That is because among them there are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant. [82] **And when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on what they have recognized from the truth. They say, "Our Lord, we have come to believe. So, write us down alongwith those who bear witness.** [83] **And what excuse do we have if we do not believe in Allah and in what has come to us from the truth, while we hope that our Lord will admit us in the company of the righteous people?"** [84]

So, Allah has awarded them, because of what they said, gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall live for ever. And that is the reward of the good in deeds. [85]

And those who disbelieved and denied Our signs, they are the people of the Fire. [86]

Sequence of Verses

Mentioned earlier was the friendliness of Jews with disbelievers.

Mentioned now is their hostility towards Muslims in tandem with the disbelievers - which was the real cause of that friendship (the enemy of my enemy is my friend!). And since the Qur'ān upholds justice universally, it has not counted everyone even among Jews and Christians as being in the same lot. Whoever among them had some good quality, that was acknowledged openly - for example, the presence of a particular group among the Christians which did not have the kind of prejudice the Jews were known for, and the statement about the Christians who had responded heartily to the call of truth and for which they were considered worthy of the best of praise and reward. This particular group was that of the Christians of Ethiopea who did nothing which could cause problems for Muslims who had migrated to Ethiopea from their home in Makkah, before the Hijrah to Madinah. Any Christian, other than them, who is like them, shall also be legally counted as one of them. As for those who had accepted the truth, they are the King of Ethiopea, Najāshī (Negus) and his courtiers who wept on hearing the Qur'ān in their own country and embraced Islam. After that, a deputation of thirty men from there came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who recited the Qur'ān to them which they heard in tears and took their *Shahādah* as Muslims. This is the Cause or Background of the revelation of this verse.

Commentary

Some Votaries of the Truth among the People of the Book

Mentioned in these verses are those among the people of the Book who, had no feelings of malice or enmity for Muslims because of their godliness and tilt towards truth. But, people of such quality - like Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām - were very rare, rather almost nonexistant among the Jews. Speaking comparatively, there were more such people among the Christians. Specially so, during the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, there was a large number of such people in Ethiopea which included King Najāshī and his civil servants. For this reason, when the Muslims of Makkah al-Mukarramah were fed up with being continually oppressed by the Quraysh, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم advised them to migrate to Ethiopea saying that he had heard that the King of Ethiopea himself was no oppressor of people, nor did he allow anyone to oppress others, therefore, Muslims should go there for some time.

Following this advice, the first group of eleven persons started their journey towards Ethiopea. Included in the group were Sayyidnā 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān and Sayyidah Ruqaiyyah, his respected wife and the daughter of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. After that, a large caravan of Muslims comprising of eighty two men in addition to women, led by Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib صلى الله عليه وسلم, reached Ethiopea. Received there nicely and gently by the King and his people, they started living there in peace.

But, the wrath of the Quraysh of Makkah knew no bounds. They could not bear by the idea that Muslims persecuted by them could live in peace in some other country. This they did not wish to allow. They sent a deputation of their men, with gifts as customary, to the King of Ethiopea with the request that he should expel Muslims from his country. But, the King of Ethiopea decided to first investigate into the matter. He talked to Sayyidnā Ja'far ibn Abī Ṭālib and his companions about Islam and its Prophet. When he heard about the life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and the teachings of Islam, he found these true to the prophecy of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and Injīl which contained the glad tidings of the coming of the Last of the Prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, a brief outline of his teachings, and his physical features as well as those of his Companions (for ready identification). Impressed with and convinced by what he found out, he returned the gifts brought by the Quraysh deputation telling them plainly that he could never order such people to leave his country.

The Effect of Sayyidnā Ja'far's Presentation on Najāshī

Sayyidnā Ja'far had succeeded in presenting a brief but very comprehensive portrayal of Islam and its teachings in the court of Najāshī, the King of Ethiopea. Then, there was their very stay (as Muslim role models) in Ethiopea which had generated not only in his heart but in the hearts of his officials and common people genuine feelings for Islam and its Prophet. Consequently, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ migrated to Madīnah al-Ṭayyibah and the news that they were comfortable and at peace there reached Ethiopea, the immigrating guests of the country decided to go to Madīnah. Then, Najāshī, the King of Ethiopea sent with them a deputation of leading scholars and missionaries from among his co-religionists to present his compliments before the

Holy Prophet ﷺ. This group was comprised of seventy persons, out of which, there were sixty from Ethiopea itself, and eight from Syria.

The Visit of Ethiopean Delegation

Attired in the coarse robes of monks, this deputation presented itself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ. He recited Sūrah Yā Sīn before them. As they heard it, tears kept flowing from their eyes. They all said how similar that was to what was revealed to Sayyidnā 'Isa عليه السلام. All of them embraced Islam.

After their return to Ethiopea, King Najāshī also embraced Islam. He sent his son as the leader of another deputation to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم with a letter from him. Unfortunately, the boat carrying them was drowned in the sea. In short, the King of Ethiopea, its officials and citizens did not only treat Islam and Muslims gently, fairly and justly, but they themselves embraced Islam finally.

According to the majority of commentators, the verses cited above were revealed about these blessed souls:

وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى

And you will certainly find that the closest of them in friendship with the believers are those who say, "We are Christians."

And about the verses which follow, and in which their weeping in fear of Allah and their acceptance of the truth has been described, the majority of commentators also agree that - though these verses have been revealed about Najāshī and the deputation sent by him - yet, its words are general. Therefore, its legal force covers and includes all such Christians who are devoted to truth and justice similar to the people of Ethiopea. That is, they were followers of the Injīl before Islam, and after the coming of Islam, they became followers of Islam.

Though, there were some people of this class even among Jews who adhered to the Torah since the period of Sayyidnā Mūsā, but when came Islam, they entered the fold of Islam. However, the number of such people was so small that it cannot be considered significant in the context of communities and nations. As for the rest of the Jews, they were the foremost in their hostility towards Muslims. Therefore, their attitude was identified at the very beginning of the verse by saying:

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ

You will certainly find that the most hostile people against the believers are the Jews ...

Limits of Interpretation

To recapitulate, it can be said that a particular group of the Christians has been praised in this verse, a group which was God-fearing and upright in matters of truth. It includes King Najāshī, his officials and citizens - as well as other Christians who had these qualities, or would have in times to come. But, it does not mean - neither based on what the text says, nor could it possibly be - that the Christians have to be taken as friends of Muslims, no matter how astray they go and how aggressive in their anti-Islam hostility they become, and yet Muslims will have to extend their hand of friendship towards them. This interpretation, as obvious, is false and is absolutely against facts. Therefore, Imām Abū Bakr Al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said in his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān: that the thinking of some people who take the praise of Christians in this verse in an absolute sense and consider them better than the Jews, again in an absolute sense, is open ignorance - because a comparison of the religious beliefs of the two groups will show that the Christians are more pronounced in being *Mushriks* (as ascribers of partners in the divinity of Allah); and as for their dealings with Muslims are concerned, common modern-day Christians have not been any less than Jews in their anti-Islam activities. However, it is correct that there have been a good many God-fearing and truth-loving people among them. That is why they had the *Taufīq* to accept Islam and become Muslims. It must be kept in mind that these verses were revealed to show this particular difference between the two groups. The Qur'ān has itself pointed out to this fact at the end of this very verse (82) in the following words: ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَّاَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ : "That is because among them there are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant (which could make them unwilling to listen and think)." Comparison makes it clear that this was not the condition of Jews. They were not God-fearing and truth-loving. Their scholars and rabbis were far removed from renouncing the material pleasures of mortal life for the sake of knowledge and religion, instead of which, they had harnessed their knowledge and learning as a source of accumulating

material benefits. This lust for the mundane had gripped them to the extent that they did not care to make a distinction between the true and the false or the lawful and the unlawful.

Those who side with Truth are the moving spirit of a community

The statement given in the verse also tells us something crucial about the life of a community or nation (of true believers) - that its *'Ulamā'* and *Mashāikh* are its real movers and makers, the very spirit of the system. Until such time that there are present in the society (genuine) *'Ulamā'* and *Mashāikh*, who would not follow their worldly desires (in matters of *Dīn* and public good of Believers) motivated by nothing but the fear of Allah and answerability before Him, then, the community or nation in which they are shall never be deprived of real good and real blessing.

Verses 87 - 88

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ وَلَا
تَعْتَدُوْا ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾ وَكُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ
اللّٰهُ حَلٰلًا طَيِّبًا ۠ وَّاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾

O those who believe, do not make unlawful good things that Allah has made lawful for you, and do not transgress. Verily, Allah does not like the transgressors. [39] **And eat any lawful, good thing from what Allah has provided for you, and fear Allah whose believers you are.** [88]

Sequence of Verses

Upto this point, the subject revolved around the people of the Book. Onwards, there is a return to subsidiary injunctions some of which were taken up early in the Sūrah, and some others also in between. Also reported is a particular link as relevant to the occasion - that monasticism has been mentioned in a complimentary sense a little earlier (82), though it is there in terms of a particular feature in it, which is the abandonment of worldly desires. But, since there was a probability that someone may take the whole concept of monasticism as praiseworthy, it was considered appropriate at this point that the

making unlawful of what Allah has made lawful be forbidden. (As abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān by Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī)

Commentary

Leaving the worldly pleasures, when permissible

The verses appearing above tell us that the renunciation of worldly life and the abstinence from appetites and passions is favourable within a certain limit, but any transgression of the Divinely—ordained limits in this matter too shall be blameworthy and Harām (unlawful, forbidden). Details are being given below.

How Ḥalāl is turned into Ḥarām : The Three Forms

There are three forms in which something made *Ḥalāl* (lawful and good) by Allah could be declared as *Ḥarām* (unlawful and evil): (1) BELIEF-WISE, that is, something is taken to be Ḥarām by believing it to be so. (2) VERBALLY, that is, something is taken to be Harām for oneself by saying so — for instance, someone swears that he will not drink cold water, or would not eat such and such *Ḥalāl* food, or would not do something which is permissible. (3) PRACTICALLY, that is, someone who neither believes nor says anything, yet decides in practice that he or she would abandon something *Ḥalāl* for ever.

1. Under the first situation, if that thing being *Ḥalāl* stands confirmed by absolute proofs, then, the person who takes it to be Harām shall become a disbeliever (*kāfir*) because of that open contravention of the Divinely-ordained law.

2. And under the second situation, if someone has made something Ḥarām for oneself by declaring it with words of oath, the oath will become effective. There are many words of oath details of which appear in *Fiqh* books - for example, someone clearly says: ' I swear by Allah, I will never eat that' or 'by Allah, I will not do that' or one might say, 'I make taking this or doing that Ḥarām for me.' The rule which governs such actions is that taking such oaths unnecessarily is a sin. If taken, one must break the oath and make amends by paying the *Kaffārah* (expiation) of that oath, the detail about which will appear later.

3. The third will be a situation in which no Ḥalāl has been made Ḥarām either by belief or word of mouth, but practically what one does is similar to what is done with something Ḥarām, that is, takes it as

obligatory to abandon it for ever. The rule in this case is: If one takes the abandonment of the Ḥalāl to be an act of *Thawāb* (merit, reward), then, it is *Bid'ah* (innovation in established religion) and *Rahbāniyah* (monasticism) - which is a grave sin as categorically laid down (*Manṣūṣ*) in the Qur'ān and Sunnah; and acting against it is *Wājib* (necessary as an obligation); and adhering to such a restriction is an act of sin. Of course, if such a restriction is not there with the intention of *Thawāb*, instead, it is there for some other reason, such as, some physical or spiritual sickness because of which one abandons something permanently, then, there will be no sin in doing so. Reports about some noble Ṣufis and other pious elders that they had abandoned some *Ḥalāl* things are all included under this third kind as they had found them to be harmful for their desiring self, or were advised by a pious elder to abstain from it as harmful in their case which they abandoned as a treatment and remedy. If so, it does not matter.

The Correct Attitude towards *Ḥalāl* Things

At the end of the first verse (87), it was said: وَلَا تَعْتَدُوْا، إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ , that is, 'and do not transgress the limits set by Allah because Allah does not like such transgressors.' Here, transgressing means that one abandons something *Ḥalāl*, without any valid excuse, as an act of *Thawāb*. This is something an ignorant person takes to be *Taqwā*, fear of Allah, while, in the sight of Allah, that is transgression, which is impermissible. Therefore, it was said in the next verse (88): وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ that is, '(eat from the good and pure sustenance Allah has blessed you with) and keep fearing Allah whose believers you are.'

Stated clearly in this verse is that leaving off good and pure things as a source of *Thawāb* (reward) is no *Taqwā*. Rather, quite contrary to that, *Taqwa* lies in using them as the blessings of Allah and showing one's gratitude for them. However, if something is abandoned as a curative measure against a physical or spiritual disease, that does not count here.

Verse 89

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا
عَقَّدْتُّمُ الْاَيْمَانَ ۚ فَكَفَّارَتُهٗٓ اِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسٰكِيْنَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ

مَا تُطْعِمُونَ أَهْلِيكُمْ أَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ أَوْ تَحْرِيرُ رَقَبَةٍ ۖ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ
فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ أَيَّامٍ ۚ ذٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ أَيْمَانِكُمْ إِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ ۚ وَاحْفَظُوٓا
أَيْمَانَكُمْ ۚ كَذٰلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

Allah does not hold you accountable for what is not countable from among your oaths, but He does hold you accountable for the oath you have bound yourself with. Its expiation is to feed ten poor persons at an average of what you feed your family with, or to clothe them, or to free a slave. And whoever finds none shall fast for three days. That is expiation for your oaths when you have sworn. And take care of your oaths. That is how Allah makes His signs clear to you, so that you may be grateful. [89]

Sequence of Verses

Mentioned earlier was the taking of *Ḥalāl* things as unlawful. Since statements to this effect are sometimes sworn, therefore, the injunction about taking of oaths follows in the present verse.

Commentary

Three Forms of Oaths and their Injunctions

1. Some forms in which oaths are taken have been described in this verse. Some have appeared in Sūrah al-Baqarah as well (Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume I, Verse 2:225, pages 562-563). The gist of all these is that false swearing about a past event knowingly is, in the terminology of Muslim jurists, *Yamīn Ghamūs* (disasterous oath) - for instance, if a person has done something, and he knows that he has done it, and then he knowingly swears that he has not done it. This is false swearing, a grave major sin the curse of which falls in the present life and in the life-to-come. But, there is no *Kaffārah* (expiation) necessary for it. *Taubah* (repentance) and *Istighfār* (seeking forgiveness from Allah) are, however, necessary. That is the reason why the Muslim jurists call it the disasterous oath. *Ghamūs* literally means that which drowns. This kind of oath drowns man into sin and its curse, a disaster for one's present and future life.

2. The second form is that someone declares on oath that a past event was true, as based on his knowledge, while it was actually false - for example, he learnt from someone that a certain person has come and trusting him, he declared on oath that the person has come, then, he came to know that this was contrary to what had actually happened. This is called *Yamīn Laghw* (ineffectual oath), that which is not counted. Similarly, if a word denoting oath, such as 'by' or 'I swear,' comes to be said unintentionally, that too is known to be what is 'ineffectual oath.' It brings neither *Kaffarāh* (expiation) nor sin.

3. The third form of oath is that one declares on oath that he would or would not do something in the future. This is known as *al-Yamīn al-Mun'aqidah* (Binding oath). The rule which governs it is that, in the event the oath is broken, *Kaffarah* (expiation) becomes necessary - and under some situations, it brings sin as well, while in some others, it does not.

At this place in the present verse of the Qur'ān, '*Laghw*' (ineffectual, not counted) obviously means the oath which brings no *Kaffārah* (expiation) - whether a sin, or not; because it has been mentioned in contrast with : عَقَّدْتُّمُ الْاَيْمَانَ (the oaths you have bound yourselves with). This tells us that the accountability (*Mu'ākhadhah*) mentioned here is only the accountability in the present world which comes in the form of *Kaffārah* (expiation).

Then, in Sūrah al-Baqarah, it is said: لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِيْٓ اَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ يُّؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ (And Allah does not hold you accountable for what is not countable from among your oaths, but holds you accountable for what your hearts have designed - 2:225). Here, '*Laghw*' (what is not countable) means an oath which slips out from one's tongue without intention or volition, or an oath one takes about something assuming it to be true while it turns out to be false actually. Then, mentioned in contrast, is the other oath in which an intentional lie has been told. This is known as *Yamīn Ghamūs* explained earlier. Therefore, as for *Yamīn Laghw*, it brings no sin, according to this verse - instead, what brings sin is *Yamīn Ghamūs* where the lie is intentional. Thus, the sin mentioned in the verse from Sūrah al-Baqarah refers to the sin one shall incur in the Hereafter for disobeying the Divine injunction. And in the present verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah, the injunction concerns the

present life of the world, where *Kaffārah* (expiation) is required. The outcome is that Allah does not hold you accountable for what is not countable in your oaths, that is, does not make it obligatory for you to make amends for them by paying *Kaffarah* (expiation). Instead, *Kaffārah* is made necessary against the particular oath which has been accomplished about doing or not doing something in the future - and then, it has been broken. After that, the details of how *Kaffārah* has to be given is described in the following words: فَكَفَّارَتُهٗٓ اِطْعَامُ عَشَرَةِ مَسٰكِيْنَ مِنْ اَوْسَطِ مَا تُطْعِمُوْنَ اَهْلِيْكُمْ اَوْ كِسْوَتُهُمْ اَوْ تَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ (89). Three options have been given here which one may choose at one's discretion: (a) feed ten poor persons two average meals, or (b) clothe ten poor persons (sufficient to give them proper cover, such as, a garment for the lower body and another for the upper), or (c) free a slave (if in possession).

Said immediately after is : فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلٰثَةِ اَيَّامٍ (And whoever finds none shall fast for three days). It means if some breaker of such an oath does not have the ability to bear the cost of this financial expiation (*Kaffārah*), that is, one who does not have the means to feed ten poor persons, or clothe them, or free a slave, then, his or her *Kaffārah* is to fast for three days. In some narrations, for the fasts mentioned at this place in the text, the command is said to be that of 'three consecutive days.' Therefore, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and some other Imāms, it is necessary that the three fasts against the *Kaffārah* (expiation) of Oath should be consecutive.

In this verse, the first word used in connection with the *Kaffārah* of Oath is: "*Iṭ'ām*" which, according to Arabic usage, could either mean 'feed' or 'give food' to someone. Therefore, as determined by the *Fuqahā'* (Muslim Jurists), may the mercy of Allah be upon them, the sense of the verse is that the person giving *Kaffārah* can choose either of the two options. He can invite ten poor persons and feed them; or, he can give the food in their possession (literally in *milkiyat* or ownership). But, in the first situation, it is necessary that he should feed ten poor persons two meals of the day to their fill and satisfaction from the average food he usually eats with his family at home. And in the second situation, he should give to each of the ten poor persons at the rate of one *Fitrah* per person, that is, 1 3/4 kilograms of wheat, or its cost in cash. He can go by any one of the three he likes. But, fasting can be

sufficient only when one does not have the ability to take any of the three options.

Paying *Kaffārah*, before Oath is Broken, is not Valid

Towards the end of the verse, the need to observe caution has been commanded about two things. The first one appears in: ذٰلِكَ كَفَّارَةُ اَيْمَانِكُمْ اِذَا حَلَفْتُمْ (that is expiation for your oaths when you have sworn). According to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and other Imāms, it means: When you give a sworn statement about doing or not doing something in the future - following which occurs its violation - then, its *Kaffārah* is what has been mentioned above. The essence of the statement is that the *Kaffārah* should be given after the oath has broken. A *Kaffārah* given before the breaking of the oath will not be valid. The reason is that the cause which makes *Kaffārah* necessary lies in the breaking of the oath. As long as the oath does not break, *Kaffārah* just does not become necessary. As there is no Ṣalāh before its time, and there is no Ramaḍān fast before the month of Ramaḍān, so it is with the *Kaffārah* of Oath which cannot be given before the oath breaks.

After that comes the second note of caution: وَاحْفَظُوْٓا اَيْمَانَكُمْ (And take care of your oaths). In this sense of guarding an oath it would mean: If you have sworn to something, then do not break your oath without a legal or physical necessity. Some other respected scholars have said that it means that one should not hasten to give a sworn statement. One should guard and protect one's oath, as if kept in reserve. Unless it be under severe compulsion, one should not take oaths casually. (Mazharī)

Verses 90 - 92

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْاَنْصَابُ وَالْاَزْلَامُ
رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ اِنَّمَا
يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ
وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ ۚ فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ
مُّنْتَهُوْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ وَ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَاحْذَرُوْا ۚ
فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿۹۲﴾

O those who believe, the truth is that wine, gambling, altar-stones and divining arrows are filth, a work of Satan. Therefore, refrain from it, so that you may be successful. [90]

The Satan wants nothing but to plant enmity and malice between you through wine and gambling, and to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah and from the *Ṣalāh*. Would you, then, abstain? [91]

Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and be careful. If you still turn back, be sure that the duty of Our Messenger is only to convey the Message clearly. [92]

Linkage of Verses

Earlier, considered abandonment of *Ḥalāl* things was prohibited. Prohibited now is the use of some Ḥarām things.

Commentary

Creation of the Universe is for the Benefit of Human Beings

Through these verses, the purpose is to tell that the Master of the Universe has created it to serve human beings. Everything in it has been appointed to take care of their wishes. They are the served ones in this Universe. There is only one restriction placed on them: Do not transgress the limits set by Allah when you benefit from what He has created. Abstaining from good and lawful things made *Ḥalāl* for you is mannerlessness and ingratitude; and the contravention of what has been prohibited in a certain form is disobedience and rebellion. A servant of Allah must make use of what has been created for him or her following the instructions of the Creator and Master. This is the *'abdiyyah* (the state of being a slave of Allah, which requires total submission to as related to Allah which is the highest possible achievement human beings can look forward to).

The first verse (90) describes the prohibition of four things: (1) Drinking, (2) Gambling, (3) Idols and (4) Divining Arrows. Another verse on this subject in almost similar words has appeared in Sūrah al-Baqarah as well [Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, Volume I, Verse 2:219, Pages 539-553]. There too, as here, these four things have been called "*Rijs*" (filth). In the Arabic language, the word "*Rijs*" refers to something foul, which is

disgusting for human taste. All four things mentioned here are, for anyone with commonsense and good taste, repulsive and disgusting.

An Explanation of "*Al-Azlām*"

One of the four things is *Azlām* which is the plural of *Zalam*. *Azlām* is the name of the arrows which were used to draw lots in gambling, an Arab practice at that time. The custom was that ten people would get together as partners and slaughter a camel. Then, rather than distribute ten equal shares from the meat to each participant, they had a way of gambling with the exercise. They had ten arrows, out of which they would pick out seven and mark them out with signs indicating the number of some shares on each - some arrow would have one, others would have two or three. The three remaining arrows were kept blank. They would put all these arrows in the quiver and give it a good shake. Then, for every participant, they would draw out one arrow from the quiver. If the arrow so drawn had a certain number of shares marked on it, the recepient of the arrow became deserving of that many shares. Whoever drew a blank arrow in his name would remain deprived of a share. This is similar to many kinds of lottery-based games and enterprises common today. Drawing lots in this manner is *Qimār* or gambling which is Ḥarām according to the Qur'ān.

The Permissible Way of Drawing Lots

However, there is one way of drawing lots which is permissible, and proved from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. According to this method, when the rights everyone has are equal and the shares too have been distributed equally, then, the shares can be determined by drawing lots. Let us take an example - a house has to be divided among four sharers so we come up with four equal shares in terms of the price. Now, we have to determine as to who keeps which share. If it cannot be done by mutual compromise and consent, it is also possible that we can settle this by drawing lots whereby whoever gets a certain portion of the house as his share may have it. Or, the number of people eager to have something is one thousand, and the rights everyone has are equal, but the number of what has to be distributed is only one hundred. In this condition, the matter can be decided by drawing lots.

As for the prohibition of the pagan custom of distributing meat by

drawing of lots through divining arrows, it has already appeared in a verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah itself, that is: وَاَنْ تَسْتَقْسِمُوْا بِالْاَزْلَامِ (and that you determine shares through the arrows - 5:3).

In short, two out of the four things declared Ḥarām in this verse, that is, '*Maisir*' (gambling) and '*Azlām*' (divining arrows), in terms of the outcome, are just the same. As for '*Anṣāb*' (altar-stones), the word *Al-Anṣāb* is the plural of *Nuṣub*. It refers to what has been made to stand as an object of worship, whether an idol, a stone or tree.

Physical and Spiritual Disorders Caused by Drinking and Gambling

The main objective in this verse, as evident from the background of its revelation and the verse which follows it, is to indicate that drinking and gambling, being agencies of corruption, have been made Ḥarām. The addition of altar-stones or idols to this list is there for listeners to understand that this matter of drinking and gambling is as serious a crime as the worship of idols.

In a *Ḥadīth* from Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: شَارِبُ الْخَمْرِ كَعَابِدِ الْوَثَنِ , that is, one who drinks is (a criminal) like the one who worships idols. In some narrations, the words appear as: شَارِبُ الْخَمْرِ كَعَابِدِ اللَّاتِ وَالْعُزّٰى , that is, one who drinks is like the one who worships (the idols) *Al-Laat* and *Al-'Uzza*.

In brief, by saying: رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ that these things are filth, a work of Satan, taken up first were their spiritual ills. The sense is that indulgence in these activities is disgusting. This is a trap of Satan. Whoever walks in never walks out, only to become a victim of many more vices. Then, the command given was: فَاجْتَنِبُوْهُ (Therefore, refrain from it) since the nature of these indulgences requires it. In the end it was said: لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ (so that you may be successful). It means that one's chances of succeeding and prospering in the present world and in the Hereafter depend on doing just that - abstain.

The second verse (91) describes the physical and outwardly visible defects of drinking and gambling: اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ الشَّيْطٰنُ اَنْ يُّوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ فِى الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ that is, the Satan wants nothing but to plant enmity and malice between you through drinking and gambling.

In fact, these verses were revealed in the background of events

when actions taken under the influence of hard drinks became the cause of mutual anger and aggression. Things like this do not simply happen by chance. When drunk, man loses reason and would compulsively act in that manner.

So it is with gambling. No doubt, the loser takes the loss on the gambling counter, but malice and anger against the adversary continue influencing his behaviour. Explaining this verse, Sayyidnā Qatādah رحمه الله تعالى says: It was the habit of some Arabs that they would bet all their belongings, even family, and lose them, after which, they would live a sorry life.

Towards the end of the verse, yet another drawback of this addiction has been pointed out in the words: وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ (and to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah, and from Ṣalāh).

Obviously, this is a spiritual harm brought by drinking and gambling which has been mentioned again after mentioning their worldly bad effects. It may be a hint to the fact that the real harm is the spiritual harm, because the real life is the eternal life of the Hereafter for which one should be more careful and concerned. A wise person should take the betterment of that life as the real batterment and the suffering of that life as the real suffering. As for this worldly life, its time span is very limited. Within these limitations, neither good nor bad stand out as something to be proud of or pine about - because both conditions will vanish in a very short time.

It can also be said that negligence towards the *Dhikr* of Allah or the Ṣalāh is harmful both in this world and in the Hereafter and for the body and soul too. That it is harmful for the Hereafter and the soul of a person is all too obvious - one who skips Ṣalāh forgetting all about Allah ruins his life to come and causes his soul to become dead. A little reflection will show that the person heedless to Allah makes his own life a curse for himself. When one turns away from Allah and makes the acquisition of wealth and recognition his ultimate objective in life, they bring so many involvements with them which result in sorrows and concerns. Once in them, one becomes deprived of his chosen objective of peace and comfort through worldly possessions. Thus men of the material are never at peace with or without what they work for in their lives. In contrast to them is one whose heart is lit with the

thought of his Creator and the bliss of his Ṣalāh. Wealth and power and office come to him with all peace and comfort they can bring. But, if they go away, nothing happens to their hearts. They are not affected by the change, for things are no happiness and losses are no sorrow as they are visiting guests of the doers of the right.

In short, if we were to think about the neglect of the *Dhikr* of Allah and the Ṣalāh, we shall come to the conclusion that its effects are equally bad for our life in the present world as well as in that of the Hereafter. Therefore, it is possible that by saying: رِجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ (... filth, a work of Satan), the purpose could be to state the other-worldly and spiritual harmfulness exclusively; and by saying: يُوْقِعَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَآءَ (Satan wants nothing but to plant enmity and malice between you), the aim could be to point out to worldly and physical evils exclusively; and by saying: يَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلٰوةِ (to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah, and the Ṣalāh), the objective could be to mention the total destruction of the life in this world and in the Hereafter both.

It will be noticed here that Ṣalāh has been mentioned separately - though, Ṣalāh is a part of the *Dhikr* of Allah. What is the wisdom behind mentioning Ṣalāh distinctly? The answer is that Ṣalāh has been mentioned separately because the text aims to indicate that Ṣalāh is important in its own place and certainly the superiormost among all kinds of *Dhikrullāh* (the remembrance of Allah).

After having described the physical and spiritual drawbacks of drinking and gambling, the way in which people have been asked to stay away from these indulgences is certainly disarming and heart-winning. It is said: فَهَلْ اَنْتُمْ مُّنْتَهُوْنَ (Would you, then, abstain?).

Described in the first two verses (90,91) was the unlawfulness of drinking and gambling, and its strict prohibition - an article of Divine Law, so to say. To make the word of law easy to act upon, it is in the third verse (92) that the Holy Qur'ān, in its characteristic way with words, has this to say:

وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ وَاحْذَرُوْا ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ .

And obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and be careful. If you turn back, be sure that the duty of Our Messenger is only

to convey the Message clearly.

The lesson to be learnt is that the command to obey Allah and His Messenger is in one's own interest, and benefit. If one does not listen to the good counsel, their action brings no loss to *Allah Jalla Sha'nuhū* or to His Messenger. That Allah is far above any gain or loss was quite obvious, but in the case of the Messenger someone might have thought that a refusal to listen to him might affect or lessen the degree of his reward or station. To remove this doubt, it was said: فَإِنْ تَوَلَّيْتُمْ فَاعْلَمُوٓا أَنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُولِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِيْنُ It means: Even if none of you were to listen to and obey Our Messenger, it would still not make any difference to his integrity and station because he has completed the mission entrusted with him. His mission was to convey the commands of Allah Ta'ālā, openly and clearly. This he has accomplished. Now, after that, whoever chooses not to obey him will bring loss on his or her person - Our Messenger has nothing to lose in this case.

Verses 93 - 96

لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ جُنَاحٌ فِيْمَا طَعِمُوْٓا
إِذَا مَا اتَّقَوْا وَّ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ ثُمَّ اتَّقَوْا وَّاٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ
اتَّقَوْا وَّأَحْسَنُوْا ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ
اٰمَنُوْا لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الصَّيْدِ تَنَالُهٗٓ أَيْدِيْكُمْ
وَرِمَاحُكُمْ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّخَافُهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ۚ فَمَنِ اعْتَدٰى بَعْدَ
ذٰلِكَ فَلَهٗ عَذَابٌ أَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾ يٰٓأَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَقْتُلُوا
الصَّيْدَ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرُمٌ ۭ وَمَنْ قَتَلَهٗ مِنْكُمْ مُّتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَآءٌ مِّثْلُ مَا
قَتَلَ مِنَ النَّعَمِ يَحْكُمُ بِهٖ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنْكُمْ هَدْيًاۢ بٰلِغَ الْكَعْبَةِ أَوْ
كَفَّارَةٌ طَعَامُ مَسٰكِيْنَ أَوْ عَدْلُ ذٰلِكَ صِيَامًا لِّيَذُوْقَ وَبَالَ
أَمْرِهٖ ۭ عَفَا اللّٰهُ عَمَّا سَلَفَ ۭ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَيَنْتَقِمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْهُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ
عَزِيْزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٩٥﴾ أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ وَطَعَامُهٗ مَتَاعًا
لَّكُمْ وَلِلسَّيَّارَةِ ۚ وَحُرِّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَرِّ مَا دُمْتُمْ حُرُمًا ۭ
وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٩٦﴾

There is no sin for those who believe and do good deeds, in what they might have eaten earlier, if they fear Allah and believe and do good deeds, again fear Allah and believe, and still again fear Allah and become good in deeds. And Allah loves those who are good in deeds. [93]

O those who believe, Allah shall certainly test you with some of the game coming in the range of your hands and spears, so that Allah may know those who fear Him while unseen. So whoever crosses the limit after all this, for him there is a painful punishment. [94]

O those who believe, do not kill game when, you are in Iḥrām (state of consecration for Hajj or 'Umrah). And whoever, from among you, kills it deliberately, then, a compensation from the cattle (is obligatory) equal to what he has killed according to the judgement of two just men from among you, an offering due to reach the Ka'bah, or an expiation, that is, to feed the poor, or its equal in fasts, so that he may feel the burden of what he did. Allah has forgiven what has passed. And whoever does it again, Allah shall subject him to retribution. Allah is Mighty, Lord of Retribution. [95]

The game of the sea and its eating has been made lawful for you, something of benefit to you and to the travellers. And the game of the land has been made unlawful for you as long as you are in Iḥrām. And fear Allah towards Whom you are going to be gathered. [96]

Sequence of Verses

A report from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in the Musnad of Aḥmad, quoted in Al-Lubāb, says: When the Verse forbidding drinking and gambling had been revealed, some people asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم that there were many people who drank wine and lived off earnings from gambling and then died before these were forbidden. What would happen to them, now that we know about these being Ḥarām? Thereupon, the verse : لَيْسَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اٰمَنُوْا (On those who believe and do good deeds, there is no sin ...) was revealed.

In a verse appearing earlier (87): يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُحَرِّمُوْا طَيِّبٰتِ (O those who believe, do not make unlawful good things ...), the making of good things unlawful was prohibited. Now, in the verse (94) : يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا

لَيَبْلُوَنَّكُمُ اللّٰهُ بِشَيْءٍ (O those who believe, Allah shall certainly test you with some ...), it is said that it is Allah Who has that absolute power to declare particular things unlawful in particular circumstances. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Commentary

Scholars have said that there are several degrees of Taqwā (abstaining from what is likely to harm the purity of one's faith). Similarly, the degrees of faith and belief are also different in terms of personal strength and weakness. The touchstone of experience and the inviolable authority of the Sharī'ah both prove that the more one progresses in the remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*), concern for life here and hereafter (*Fikr*), good deeds (*Al-'Amalus-Sāliḥ*) and *Jihād* in the way of Allah (*Al-Jihād fī Sabīlillāh*), the more filled his heart is with the fear of Allah and the awe of His greatness and majesty, with his faith and belief becoming firm and fortified more than ever. Thus, there are degrees of one's ascent onto the pathways of Allah (referred to as *Sayr-ilallāh* by spiritual masters). The considered repetition in verse 93 of the basis of *Taqwā* (fear of Allah) and *'Īmān* (faith) is a pointer in this direction. Finally, at the end of the verse, what stands identified is the seeker's last station - *Iḥsān* (righteousness at its best) - and the reward for it too, which is, the love of Allah. (Tafsīr Usmānī)

Rulings:

1. The game (*Ṣayd*) which is Ḥarām (unlawful) in the Ḥaram (the precincts of the Sacred Mosque) and in *Iḥrām* (the state of consecration for Ḥajj or 'Umrah) is general in sense. It may be eatable, that is, a *Ḥalāl* (lawful) animal, or one uneatable, that is, a Ḥarām (unlawful) animal (as generalized in the verse).

2. *Ṣayd*, that is, game, is the name of animals which are wild and who habitually do not live close to human beings. Thus, as for those which are naturally domesticated, such as, sheep, goats, cows and camels, slaughtering and eating them in *Iḥrām* is correct.

3. However, animals that have been exempted by a specific rule can be trapped and killed. It is *Ḥalāl*, for example, the hunting

of sea (or water) game as permitted by Allah Ta'ālā: أُحِلَّ لَكُمْ صَيْدُ الْبَحْرِ (lawful for you is the game of the sea). This applies to some land animals, crawlers and birds as well, such as, the wolf, the biting dog, the crow, the kite, the snake and the scorpion. Similarly, permissible is the killing of an attacking beast. Their exemption has been mentioned in *Ḥadīth*. This tells us that the letter *Alif-Lām* in الصَّيْدَ (Al-Ṣayd - 5:95) is that of *'Ahd*.[1]

4. It is permissible for a *Muhrim* (person in *Iḥrām*) to eat from *Halāl* game which has been hunted in a state other than that of *Iḥrām* and in a place other than that of the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram - subject to the condition that this person (in *Iḥrām*) has not been an assistant or adviser or guide in the hunting and killing of that game. This is exactly what the *Ḥadīth* says. In addition to that, there is an indication towards this rule in the words: لَا تَقْتُلُوا (*lā taqtulū*: do not kill) in this verse (95) - because what is said here is "*lā taqtulū*" (do not kill) and not '*lā ta'kulū*' (do not eat).

5. The way it is obligatory (*Wājib*) to pay compensation (*Jazā'*) against killing land game in the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram (Sacred Mosque) intentionally, similarly, it is also obligatory (*Wājib*) if done by mistake or forgetfulness. (As deduced in Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī)

6. The compensation (*Jazā'*) which becomes obligatory (*Wājib*) the first time shall remain equally obligatory (*Wājib*) in such killing a second or a third time as well.

7. The substance of the compensation (*Jazā'*) is that, after having determined the (facts of) time and place of the killing of this animal, one should get an estimate of the cost of this animal from two just person, which is better, but, it is also permissible that he can have only one just person do it. Then, there are other details: If the killed animal is inedible (that is, Ḥarām), then, this obligatory cost will not be more than the cost of a she-goat.

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1. The Lām of *'Ahd* indicates that the word is used in a restricted sense and not in a general sense. Here it means that all types of games are not prohibited, but the prohibition is restricted to some of them. (Muḥammad Taqi Usmānī)

And if the animal was edible (that is, *Ḥalāl*), then, whatever the estimate (of cost), the whole of it will be obligatory (*Wājib*). Now, beyond these two situations, he has three options: (1) Whether he buys an animal at this price keeping in view the (standard) conditions which govern a sacrificial animal, and after slaughtering it properly within the sacred precincts of the Ḥarām (the Sacred Mosque and its environs), distributes it to persons poor and needy; or, (2) gives grains equivalent to the price of the animal, in accordance with the conditions of *Ṣadaqatul-Fitr*, at the rate of 1/2 *Ṣā'* per poor and needy person; or, (3) keeps as many fasts as would be the number of poor and needy persons to whom the amount of grains could reach at the rate of 1/2 *Ṣā'* per person. As for the distribution of the grains and the keeping of fasts, there is no restriction that these be done within the sacred precincts of the Ḥaram. And in case the obligatory (*Wājib*) amount is a price less than 1/2 *Ṣā'*, then, one has the choice of either giving it to a poor and needy person, or keep a fast. Similarly, if one is left with less than 1/2 *Ṣā'* even after giving at the rate of 1/2 *Ṣā'* per poor and needy person, still then, one has the choice of either giving the remainder to one poor and needy person, or keep a fast. The weight of 1/2 *Ṣā'* is the equivalent of 1.75 Seers or 1.62 kg. approximately (usually rounded as a matter of precaution).

8. If in lieu of giving the share of the number of poor and needy persons arrived at in the said estimate, one were to feed them two meals of the day, to their fill and satisfaction, that too will be permissible.

9. If an animal matching the cost arrived at in the estimate was selected for slaughter - but, some amount was left over - then, in this remainder, one has the choice of either buying another animal, or giving grain against it, or fasting in terms of the distributability of the grains. As compensation (*Jazā'*) is obligatory in killing, similarly, in the case of such an animal becoming wounded, an estimate would have to be taken to determine how low the price of the animal has become as a result of its being wounded. Once again, in this amount of the cost, the same

three options will be permissible.

10. The animal the hunting of which is Ḥarām (unlawful) for a *Muḥrim* (one in the consecrated state of *Iḥrām*), its slaughtering is Ḥarām too. If the *Muḥrim* were to slaughter it, its legal status will be that of carrion, dead animal. (In *'lā-taqtulū,*: [do not kill] there is a hint towards slaughter being like killing).

11. If the place where the animal was killed was a forest, then, the estimate will be made in terms of the habitation close to it.

12. Pointing to, guiding along or assisting in hunting is Ḥarām (unlawful) as hunting itself.

Verses 97 - 100

جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ الْكَعْبَةَ الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ وَالشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ
وَالْهَدْيَ وَالْقَلَآئِدَ ۭ ذٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٩٧﴾
اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٩٨﴾
مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ
﴿٩٩﴾ قُلْ لَّا يَسْتَوِي الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ
الْخَبِيْثِ ۚ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

Allah has made Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a source of stability for the people, and the sacred month and the sacrificial animal and the garlands. All this so that you may learn that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and that Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything. [97] **Be sure that Allah is severe in punishment and that Allah is Very Forgiving, Very Merciful.** [98]

The duty of Our Messenger is only to convey the Message. And Allah knows what you disclose and what you conceal. [99]

Say, "The bad and the good are not equal, even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad. So, fear

Allah, O men of understanding, that you may be successful." [100]

Commentary

Four Sources of Tranquility

The first verse (97) mentions four things as the cause of constancy, survival and tranquility for people.

The first is the Ka'bah. In Arabic, Ka'bah is the name of a place which is square. Another house made by the Arab tribe of *Khath'am* carried the same name, that is, *al-Ka'bah-al-Yamāniyah*, to be exact. Therefore, to distinguish the *Baytullah* (House of Allah) from this place, the words: الْبَيْتَ الْحَرَامَ (Al-Baytul-Ḥarām: The Sacred House) were added to the name of the Ka'bah.

The word "*Qiyām*" and *Qiwām* are verbal nouns. They refer to that on which the stability and survival of something depends. Therefore, " قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ " in the text comes to mean that the Ka'bah and its adjuncts are the cause and source of the stability and survival of people.

Lexically, the word: اَلنَّاسِ (*annās*) is used for people in general. At this place, because of the topical context, they could mean the people of Makkah proper, or the people of Arabia and the peoples of the world as well. Obviously, it includes human beings of the whole world - however, the people of Makkah and the people of Arabia do have a unique status. Therefore, the sense of the verse would be that Allah Ta'ālā has made *Ka'batullah* (The Ka'bah of Allah) and what is mentioned later, the source of stability, survival and tranquility for people. As long as people of the world from each country, each region and each direction keep turning their orientation towards *Baytullah* to say their Ṣalāh, and the Ḥajj of *Baytullah* continues to be performed by those on whom its performance has become obligatory (*farḍ*) - until then, this whole world will keep going and stay safe. And if, there ever comes that fatal year when no one makes Ḥajj, or no one turns towards *Baytullah* to offer Ṣalāh, then, the whole world will be overtaken by mass Punishment.

Baytullah is the Mainstay of the Universe

The respected master of Tafsīr, 'Atā' has stated the subject in the words which follow: لوتركوه عامًا واحدا لم ينظروا ولم يؤخروا (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ). This

tells us that, significance-wise, *Baytullah* is the pillar of this whole world. As long as people keep turning towards it and Ḥajj keeps being performed, the world will stay. And if, this reverence of *Baytullah* were to terminate at some time, the world will also be terminated. However, there remains the question: What is the connection and linkage between the universal system and *Baytullah*? But then, knowing its reality is not necessary - who knows the reality behind the mutual connection of magnet and iron and lightening and straw? But, it is a reality proved through observation. It cannot be rejected. The comprehension of the reality of the mutual linkage between *Baytullah* and the universal system is also not within the reach and control of mortal man. That can be known only when the Creator of the universe tells us about it. That *Baytullah* is the cause of the survival of the whole universe is a thing of the spirit. Physical insight or formal research cannot reach it. But, its being the cause of peace and tranquility for Arabia and the people of Makkah stands proved by long experiences and observations.

Baytullah **: Symbol and Substance of Peace**

Peace is generally maintained in the world through government laws and its implementation. That is why robbers, thiefs, killers and plunderers do not dare. But, during the Arab *Jāhiliyyah*, there was no formal government nor was there some general law to maintain public peace. Whatever political system there was, it was based on tribal considerations. One tribe could attack the life, property and honour of another tribe anytime at its choice. Therefore, no tribe had the occasion to enjoy peace and tranquility any time. Allah Almighty, with His perfect power, made the *Baytullah* in Makkah al-Mukarramah stand as a regular government ushering peace and tranquility. As anyone in his right frame of mind would not dare breaking the law of a strong government in our day, so it was, even during those days of ignorance, that Allah Almighty had impinged the reverence of the *Baytullah* on the hearts of common people in a manner that they would throw all their personal desires and emotions behind their backs when it came to upholding its honour and station.

So, this was Arab *Jāhiliyyah*, the so called Age of Ignorance, proverbial for tribal prejudices and long drawn wars. But, such was the reverence for *Baytullah* and its adjuncts which Allah had placed in their hearts that they would say just nothing to even their sworn enemy despite their anger and chagrin - if the enemy had entered the Ḥaram. A son who met the killer of his father in the Ḥaram would lower his gaze and walk away from him.

Similarly, as much respect was also given to a person who had embarked on his Ḥajj and 'Umrah or who had been carrying animals for sacrifice in the Ḥaram. The result was that even the worst person around would not hurt him in anyway - to the limit that they would say nothing to even a sworn enemy if he was in a condition when signs of his being on Ḥajj and 'Umrah, such as the garments of *Iḥrām* or garlands, were all too visible.

Take an example. The year was Hijrah 6. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم accompanied by a group of his Ṣaḥābah entered into the *Iḥrām* of 'Umrah and started for his journey towards *Baytullah*. He stopped at Hudaybiyah close to the Ḥaram limits and sent Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضى الله عنه to Makkah alongwith some colleagues so that they can tell the chiefs of Makkah that Muslims have come at this time not for fighting but for performing 'Umrah, therefore, they should not be obstructed.

It was after a good deal of debate that they sent a representative of theirs to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. When he saw him, he said: This person is an upholder of the sanctities of *Baytullah*, therefore, the sacrifical animals marked for sacrifice should be brought before him. When the representative saw these sacrificial animals, he conceded that such people should never be stopped from going to *Baytullah*.

So, as said earlier, Allah Almighty had placed such awe of the venerated Ḥaram - even during the days of *Jahiliyyah* - that it became the very cause and source of peace and tranquility. As a direct result of this reverence, only those who either went in and out of Ḥaram, or those who came for their Ḥajj and 'Umrah with some sign of the intended pilgrimage on them, were the ones who remained protected - outsiders did not benefit from this peace and tranquility. But, in Arabia itself, the way they honoured the site of *Baytullah* and its environs

universally, they would also give equal respect to the months of Ḥajj. They called these, the Sacred Months. Some had included the month of Rajab along with them. During these months, fighting and killing - even outside the Ḥaram - was considered by the whole Arabia as prohibited, from which they would abstain.

1. Therefore, the Holy Qur'ān has included three more things as being قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ (stability for people) alongwith the Ka'bah. The first is: اَلشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ, that is, the Sacred Month. Since the word, شَهْر (*shahr:* month) has been placed here in its singular form, most commentators say that it means the month of Dhul-Ḥijjah at this place, the month during which the rites of Ḥajj are performed. Some commentators have said that, though the word used is singular, but it signifies category whereby all Sacred Months are included here.

2. Mentioned secondly is "*al-hady*" which refers to an animal sacrificed in Ḥaram. It was common Arab practice not to check and obstruct anyone carrying such sacrificial animals who could travel on in peace and be able to do what he intended to do. Thus, 'sacrificial animals' also became a cause of the establishment of peace.

3. The third thing is "*Al-Qalā'id.*" The word is the plural form of *Qilādah*. It means a garland. There was a custom in the age of Arab *Jāhiliyyah* that a person who went out for Ḥajj would put a garland round his neck as a sign so that people may know that here was someone going for Ḥajj and that he should not be molested. Similarly, they would put garlands round the necks of their sacrificial animals too. These were also known as the *Qalā'id*. So, the *Qalā'id* also became a source of peace and tranquility.

A little thought will show that 'the sacred month,' 'the sacrificial animal,' and 'the *Qalā'id*' are all adjuncts or auxiliaries of the *Baytullah*. Reverence for them is part of the reverence of *Baytullah*. Allah Ta'ālā has made the combination of these a source of stability (even constancy and resilience) in all matters relating to the worldly and otherworldly life of the people of Arabia, and that of the people of Makkah particularly - as well as, for all humanity in general.

While explaining the expression: قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ (stability for people), some commentators have said that it means that the *Baytullah* and the Sa-

cred Ḥaram around it has been made a place of peace for everyone. Others have said that it refers to the extended means of sustenance for the people of Makkah, for what is not grown or made there indigenously keeps reaching them from all over the world by the grace of Allah Ta'ālā. Still some others have said that people of Makkah known as the custodians of *Baytullah* were held in great esteem as special people serving the House of Allah, therefore, it is the particular distinction of these people which has been identified in the Qur'ānic expression translated as 'stability for people.'

Imām al-Rāzī has said that there is no contradiction in all these sayings which are included within the sense of قِيٰمًا لِّلنَّاسِ (stability for people) since Allah Ta'ālā has made *Baytullah* the source of betterment, prosperity and success (both materially and spiritually) for the stay, survival, stability, sustenance and return (to it, as well as, through it to the final destination of the Hereafter) for all peoples. And as for the people of Arabia, particularly those of Makkah, they have been blessed by Allah with its outward and inward blessings.

At the end of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكَ لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الْاَرْضِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ (All this so that you may learn that Allah knows what is in the heavens and what is in the earth, and that Allah is All-Knowing in respect of everything). It means that Allah has made *Baytullah* and its adjuncts the source of stability, survival, peace and tranquility for people, something the people of Arabia keep witnessing particularly. This has been said so that everyone should know that Allah Ta'ālā knows everything in the earth and the heavens and He alone is capable of managing and administering it.

In the second verse (98), it was said: اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Be sure that Allah is severe in punishment and that Allah is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful). This is telling us that the prescribed injunctions of *Ḥalāl* (lawful) and *Ḥarām* (unlawful) are based on ideal wisdom and consideration. As long as they are obeyed and followed, they would bring nothing but good for the person who does just that. However, electing to do what is contrary to them is nothing but embracing the worst of curse and punishment. Along with the warning, it was also said that, should someone commit a sin forgetfully or heedlessly, then, Allah Ta'ālā does not punish instantly, instead of which, the

doors of Allah's forgiveness stay open for those who repent and feel ashamed of what they have done.

In the third verse (99), it was said: مَا عَلَى الرَّسُوْلِ اِلَّا الْبَلٰغُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُوْنَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُوْنَ that is, the duty of Our Messenger is only to convey Our *Aḥkām* (injunctions) to people created by Us. After that, whether they accept and believe, or reject and disbelieve, its profit and loss reaches only them. That they disbelieve brings no loss to Our Messenger. And let this be understood that Allah cannot be deceived for He knows everything done by anybody, openly or secretly.

In the fourth verse (100), it was said: قُلْ لَّا يَسْتَوِى الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ (Say, "The bad and the good are not equal ...). In Arabic, the words "*Ṭayyib*" and "*Khabīth*" are antonyms. *Ṭayyib* refers to what is the best and purest in everything and *Khabīth* to what is the most condemned and evil. In this verse, as held by the majority of commentators, *Khabīth* means Ḥarām or impure, while *Ṭayyib* means Ḥalāl and pure. Thus, the verse would come to mean that with Allah Ta'ālā, rather with everyone having sound reason and good taste, pure and impure or Ḥalāl and Ḥarām cannot be equal.

In view of the general sense of *Khabīth* and *Ṭayyib* at this place, it is inclusive of wealth and property which is Ḥalāl or Ḥarām, and human beings who are good or bad, and deeds and morals which are virtuous or vicious, all of the three. The sense of the verse is clear from the truth that good and bad are not equal. According to this natural law, Ḥalāl and Ḥarām and pure and impure things are not equal in the sight of Allah Ta'ālā, similar to which, also not equal are good and bad deeds and morals, similarly again, also not equal are virtuous and vicious human beings.

Following immediately in this verse (100), it was said: وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ (even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad). It means that, though onlookers are sometimes awed by the abundance of things evil and impure, they would even go on to take these very things to be good just because they have spread out all over and because they seem to be winning the day, but, this is only a disease of human knowledge and consciousness, and certainly a shortcoming of the inherent feeling for the right.

The Background of the Revelation of the Verse

Reporting the background of the revelation of this verse, some narrations say that when liquor, and its buying and selling too, was prohibited in Islam, a dealer in liquor who had some cash savings from that business asked the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, I have with me this saving from my liquor business, if I were to spend this in some good and pious cause, would that be beneficial for me? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: If you will spend it in *Jihād* or Ḥajj or something similar, it would not even be worth the weight of the tiny feather of a mosquito, for Allah Ta'ālā does not accept anything other than what is pure and Ḥalāl (lawful).

This devaluation and depreciation of wealth is in terms of the Hereafter. If we look a little deeper and keep the ultimate end of things in sight, we shall discover that Ḥalāl and Ḥarām wealth or property are not equal even in the businesses of this mortal world. The kind of benefits, favourable consequences, real comfort and bliss which come through *Ḥalāl*, never do and never can come from Ḥarām.

Citing Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr reports that when Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz, the rightly-guided Khalīfah of the age of the *Tābi'īn*, stopped impermissible taxes imposed by the oligarchy before him, returned monies and properties taken illegally to the rightful owners, the government treasury became empty and the graph of usual income came very low. Then, the governor of a province wrote a letter to him in which he complained about the low income of the public treasury and asked him as to how would the affairs of the government run under such circumstances. Sayyidnā 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz رحمة الله عليه answered him by quoting this very verse: لَا يَسْتَوِى الْخَبِيْثُ وَالطَّيِّبُ وَلَوْ اَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ (The bad and the good are not equal, even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad). He also wrote: People before you had used injustice and oppression to fill the treasury, now you match it by establishing equity and justice and let the holding of your treasury stand reduced. And do not care. The expenditures of our government shall be met within this reduced income.

Though the cause of the revelation of this verse is a particular event, the basic message of the verse is that numbers being low or high do not mean much. Matters cannot be measured by majority and

minority and a human hand-count of fifty one against forty nine cannot go on to become the touchstone of that which is right and true.

In fact, if we were to even casually look into the state of affairs prevailing around every section of society in the world, then, we shall see less of good and more of evil. Compare belief with disbelief; godliness, purity, honesty and trust with sinfulness and debauchery; justice and equity with injustice and oppression; knowledge with ignorance; reason with unreason - one is bound to find more of the later in all these comparisons. This leads us to become certain that the numerical abundance of some thing, group or party cannot be an absolute proof of its being good or true. Instead of that, the good in that thing or group or party depends on relevant particulars and states. If they are good, they are good, and if they are bad, they are bad. This is the reality the Holy Qur'ān has stated clearly by saying: وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكَ كَثْرَةُ الْخَبِيْثِ (even though you are attracted by the profusion of the bad).

Of course, Islam too has declared numerical majority to be decisive on some occasions, and that too where there be no ruling authority competent enough to decide by the power of argument and the assessment of intrinsic qualities. On occasions like this, in order to resolve the disputes among masses of people, majority vote is resorted to. Take the example of the problem of appointing an Imām or leader in a situation when there is no Imām or Amīr or leader present to give a decision. Therefore, on some occasions, majority opinion has been preferred to ward off possible dispute and resolve matters peacefully. It never means that what has been adopted by a majority of people should become Ḥalāl and permissible and true.

At the end of the verse it was said: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ (So, fear Allah, O men of understanding). By addressing the men of understanding this verse indicates that it is not the attitude of the men of wisdom to be attracted to something because of its numerical or quantitative abundance, or to take the majority as the touchstone of what is true and correct. Intelligent people would not do something like that. Therefore, it is to caution all people of understanding against these attitudes that they have been commanded with: فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ (fear Allah).

Verses 101 - 103

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَسْـَٔلُوا عَنْ أَشْيَآءَ إِن تُبْدَ لَكُمْ تَسُؤْكُمْ
وَإِن تَسْـَٔلُوا عَنْهَا حِينَ يُنَزَّلُ ٱلْقُرْءَانُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ عَفَا ٱللَّهُ
عَنْهَا وَٱللَّهُ غَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ قَدْ سَأَلَهَا قَوْمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ ثُمَّ
أَصْبَحُوا بِهَا كَٰفِرِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ مَا جَعَلَ ٱللَّهُ مِنۢ بَحِيرَةٍ وَلَا
سَآئِبَةٍ وَلَا وَصِيلَةٍ وَلَا حَامٍ وَلَٰكِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى
ٱللَّهِ ٱلْكَذِبَ وَأَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

O those who believe, do not ask about things which, if disclosed, may displease you; and if you ask about them when the Qur'ān is being revealed, they will be disclosed to you. Allah has pardoned you for it. And Allah is Most Forgiving, Forbearing. [101] **People before you have asked such questions, then became disbelievers because of it.** [102]

Allah has made no *Baḥīrah*, no *Sā'ibah*, no *Waṣīlah* and no *Ḥāmī* (names of animals dedicated to idols in *Jāhiliyyah* on different grounds) but those who disbelieve coin a lie against Allah, and most of them do not understand. [103]

Commentary

The Prohibition of Asking Unnecessary Questions

These verses warn people who keep investigating unnecessarily into Divine injunctions. So fond and bent are they in this exercise that they would go to the outer limit of asking questions even about injunctions which have not been prescribed at all and for which there is really no genuine need that they be asked. In this verse, such people have been instructed not to ask questions lest they are subjected to some trial, or they have to face disgrace as a result of the disclosure of their secrets.

The Background of the Revelation

As narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, the background or the cause of the revelation of these verses is as follows. When the verse concerning the

obligation of Ḥajj was revealed, Sayyidnā Al-Aqra' ibn Ḥābis رضى الله عنه asked: 'Have we been obligated with Ḥajj every year?' The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم did not answer that question. He asked again. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم still remained silent. When he asked a third time, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reprimanded him by saying: If, in answer to your question, I had said, 'Yes, the Ḥajj is obligatory every year' - so it would have become, and you would have been unable to do it. After that, he added: Things about which I give you no command, leave them as they are. Do not ask questions by digging and prying into them. Communities before you have been damned eternally through this very proliferation of questioning because they, questions after questions about what Allah and His Messenger did not make obligatory on them, and in consequence of their unnecessary enquiry, these optional things were made obligatory - and then, they got involved in the unfortunate practice of disobeying these. Your established routine should be: Do what I order you to do, with the best of your ability, and leave what I order you not to do (that is, do not dig and pry into things about which no injunctions are given).

There is No *Nubuwwah* (Prophethood) and *Waḥy* (Revelation) after the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم

It has also been tacitly said in this verse: وَإِنْ تَسْئَلُوا عَنْهَا حِيْنَ يُنَزَّلُ الْقُرْاٰنُ تُبْدَ لَكُمْ : 'and if you ask about them while the Qur'ān is being revealed, they will be disclosed to you (through revelation).' Here, by restricting it with the time duration of the revelation of the Qur'ān, the indication given is that it will be after the completion of the revelation of the Qur'ān, that the process of Prophethood (*Nubuwwah*) and Revelation (*Waḥy*) will be discontinued.

Though, after the discontinuation of this process of Prophethood and Revelation, the consequences that new injunctions may come, things not obligatory may become obligatory or someone's secret may be disclosed through revelation are not likely to take effect - but, minting unnecessary questions, falling for investigations into them or asking about things for which there is no need, shall still remain prohibited, even after the discontinuation of the process of Prophethood. The reason is simple. This is a waste of time - your own and that of others. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

مِنْ حُسْنِ إِسْلَامِ الْمَرْءِ تَرْكُهُ مَالَا يَعْنِيهِ

One of the qualities making someone a good Muslim is that one leaves what is unnecessary.

This tells us that many of our brother Muslims who keep investigating into unnecessary subjects, such as, the name of the mother of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام, or the precise length and breadth of the Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, indulge in what has no effect on one's conduct in life. Therefore, asking such questions is blameworthy - specially when it is already known that people who tend to ask such questions are mostly unaware of the basics of their religion. The problem is that falling for what is wasteful invariably results in making one stay deprived of doing what is necessary. As for the large body of work left by Muslim jurists in which they have answered assumed religious problems and questions, it was not something unnecessary. Later events proved that they were needed by future generations. Therefore, they do not fall under the purview of wasteful or meaningless questions. It is also a part of Islamic teachings that one should not indulge in any activity, whether intellectual or practical, a task or a conversation, and waste precious time through it, unless there is some gain to be made from it in terms of the worldly or other-wordly life.

The Definition of *Baḥīrah* and *Sā'ibah*

The names *Baḥīrah*, *Sā'ibah*, *Waṣīlah* and *Ḥāmī* are connected with customs prevailing during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*. Commentators differ in their exegesis. It is possible that all these words were applied each to a different situation. We limit ourselves to the explanation given by Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn al-Musaiyyib رضی اللہ عنہ as it appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī:

BAḤĪRAH, an animal the milk from which was dedicated in the name of idols, and was not used by anyone personally.

SĀ'IBAH, an animal which was released in the name of idols, like a bull in some rural areas of our time.

ḤĀMĪ, a male camel having copulated with a particular number, which was also released in the name of idols.

WAṢĪLAH, a she-camel giving birth to female offspring continuous-

ly, uninterrupted by the birth of a male, was also released in the name of idols.

In addition to doing what was *Shirk*, these people were challenging the right of benefiting from the meat of an animal, or its milk, or riding it, declared permissible by Almighty Allah, and placing their own restrictions on their being lawful or unlawful - as if the office of making Divine laws belonged to them! And the cruel joke was that they took these polytheistic customs of theirs to be the source of attaining the pleasure and nearness of Almighty Allah. The answer to this was: Almighty Allah had never appointed these customs. If their elders did it, they fabricated lies against Him, and the ignorant masses accepted them. In short, a two-pronged warning has been given here by saying that the way it is a crime to invite hardships in Divine injunctions by asking purposeless questions, similarly, it is much more serious a crime that one goes about proposing things as *Ḥalāl* or *Ḥarām* based on one's personal opinions and desires without the will and command of the Law-Giver. (Tafsīr Usmānī)

Verse 104 - 105

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا
حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا ۚ أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَاؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ
شَيْئًا وَلَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ
لَا يَضُرُّكُم مَّن ضَلَّ إِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا
فَيُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has sent down, and to the Messenger;" they say, "sufficient for us is what we have found our forefathers on." Is it so, even though their forefathers knew nothing, and had no guidance either? [104]

O those who believe, take care of your own selves. The one who has gone astray cannot harm you, if you are on the right path. To Allah is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you have been doing. [105]

Sequence of Verses

Mentioned earlier was one ignorant habit of the disbelievers who were very rigid in their customs. There were many more of such habits which made Muslims grieve. Therefore, the text now addresses Muslims asking them not to worry about others. They have been asked to correct themselves first - and then try to reform others within the limit of what they can do. Onward from there, that their efforts bear fruit is something beyond their control. Therefore, for them the best course is: Do your own job and not the job of others.

Commentary

The Background of the Revelation of the Verses

Following forefathers was one of the many customs of *Jāhiliyyah* which had involved them in all sorts of evils, and equally deprived them of all kinds of virtues too. As reported in the Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr from Ibn Abī Ḥātim, if a lucky person listened to the truth and embraced Islam, he was put to shame on the plea that he had proved his forefathers to be no good since he took to another way at the cost of the way of his forefathers. It was this compounded error of theirs whereupon the following verse was revealed:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ مَآ أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ وَإِلَى الرَّسُولِ قَالُوا حَسْبُنَا مَا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَآءَنَا

> And when it is said to them, "Come to what Allah has sent down, and to the Messenger;" they say, "sufficient for us is what we have found our forefathers on."

In other words, when they were asked to turn to the truth and to the injunctions revealed by Allah Taʿālā, and to the Messenger who is, in all possible respects, the guarantor of good for them, then, they have no answer to give but that 'the customs on which we found our forefathers are sufficient for us.'

This is the master argument of *Shayṭān* which made millions of people fall into error despite having at least average sense, knowledge and skills. Answering it, the Qur'ān said: أَوَلَوْ كَانَ آبَآؤُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا (Is it so, even if their forefathers knew nothing ...). For those who would care to ponder, this one sentence of the Qur'ān has provided a correct principle to uphold when following a person or group or party - a principle

which brings sight to the unsighted and reality to the ignorant and the heedless. It makes sense if those who do not know follow those who do, the uninitiated follow the experienced and the ignorant follow the learned. But, what does not make sense is that one elects to move away from the standards of knowledge, reason and guidance and ends up making the following of forefathers as preferred practice - without realizing as to where this leader of theirs is and to where would he take them yet having the compulsion to tag along behind him?

This is how some people take a mob of people as the yardstick of right and wrong. Wherever they see a lot of people going, they will start moving in that direction. This too is absurd - because the majority of people in this world is always that of those who are not the wisest or the smartest or the most virtuous in deeds. Therefore, following a mob of people cannot become the criterion of distinction between truth and untruth or good and bad.

Following an Undeserving Leader is Asking for Trouble

This sentence of the Qur'ān gives everyone a clear lesson in wisdom - that none of these criterions are at all sufficient to help in choosing someone as a leader to be followed. The correct attitude is that everyone should first determine the aim of his life and the direction of his journey in it. Then, in order to achieve that purpose, he has to look for a person who has the knowledge of that direction and is himself proceeding to it. When one finds a person like that, then, tagging along behind him can certainly take one all the way to his destination. This is the reality underlying what we know as the *Taqlīd* (following) of the *Mujtāhid Imāms*. They know *Dīn* and they follow it too. Therefore, those who do not know can, by following them, achieve the main purpose of religion, that is, the obedience to Allah and His Messenger, and the following of their commands. As for one who is already astray, who does not himself know the destination, or is knowingly going in a direction opposite to the destination, then, following him shall be, in the sight of every wise person, a waste of one's efforts and deeds, rather the signing of one's own warrant of destruction. It is a pity that in the present age of so-called knowledge and enlightenment, even the people of education and foresight are ignoring the fact that the greatest cause of world upheaval is the locked following of leaders who are

incompetent, undeserving, and false.

The Criterion of Leadership

This sentence of the Qur'ān gives two clear criterions of choosing a leader. These are having Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Guidance (*Ihtidā'*). Knowledge means the knowing of the desired purpose or destination and the knowing of the methods to reach it, while having Guidance means moving towards the chosen objective. Combined together, it would mean constant effort based on sound knowledge.

To explain, it can be said that it is necessary to first find out - before making the choice of a leader - if he is fully conversant with the objectives and methods chosen to be followed. Then, it has to be seen whether he himself is traveling on the same path and in the same direction. And then, it has to be determined whether or not his conduct is in accordance with his knowledge. So, in order to take someone as a leader to be followed, it is necessary to test him on the anvil of sound knowledge and steady conduct. None of the other options based on ancestry and lineage, or being in the lead followed by masses of people, or being wealthy through money or property, or being in power and authority, not one of them is worthy of being considered as the criterion of leadership in the real sense.

An Effective Method of Criticism

At this place, the Qur'ān has pointed out to the error of people who are used to following their ancestral customs blindly. However, right alongwith it, it has told us about an effective method which can be used when needed to identify the error of the other person, so that the addressee is not hurt or provoked. It will be noticed that the comment made in the text is not direct. It does not say that their forefathers were ignorant or astray. Instead of that, it employs a subtle interrogative style in asking if the practice of following one's forefathers could be reasonable in a situation when they did not have either knowledge or guidance.

Comfort for the Reformers of People

In the second verse (105), Muslims who sacrificed a great deal in their concern for reforming people have been comforted by saying that they had done their best to spread the call of truth and they had done their duty of conveying to people what was good for them. Now, if

there were people who chose to stick by their error, that was not for them to worry about for their going astray will bring no loss to them. It was said:

يَاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَّنْ ضَلَّ اِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ

O those who believe, take care of your own selves. Those who have gone astray cannot harm you, if you are on the right path.

These words of the verse, if looked at outwardly, sometimes are taken in the sense that it is enough for one to only take care of one's own conduct, and just correct it when necessary. This would leave out the others who may keep doing what they do - there was no need to think about that. Such thinking is contrary to a great many very clear statements of the Qur'ān where Bidding the Fair (*al-amr bil-ma'rūf*) and Forbidding the Unfair (*al-nahy 'anil-munkar*) has been declared to be an important duty in Islam and a singular distinction of the Muslim community. When this verse was revealed, some people faced doubts. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم clarified by saying that the verse was not contradictory to the injunctions regarding the Bidding of the Fair. If they were to leave the mission of Bidding the Fair, they will be answerable for that. Therefore, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr has, in his Tafsīr of the Verse as reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīt, said: Keep doing what your religion obligates you with, which includes *Jihād* and *Al-amr bil-ma'rūf* (Bidding the Fair). If, even after doing all this, those who remain astray could bring no loss on you. A little deliberation in the words: اِذَا اهْتَدَيْتُمْ (if you are on the right path) of the Qur'ān itself makes this explanation all the more clear as the converse of it shows that one who has abandoned the duty of Bidding the Fair is obviously not on the right path.

Reported in Tafsīr Al-Durr Al-Manthūr, is an event relating to Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه. Someone mentioned before him a serious dispute between certain people he named who were calling each other *Mushriks* (polytheists). Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar said: Do you think I am going to tell you to go and fight them? Never. Go, talk to them softly. If they listen, fine. If not, stop worrying about them. Get busy taking care of your own selves. After having said that, it was

this very verse that he recited as the confirmation of his answer to their statement.

Sayyidnā Abū-Bakr رضى الله عنه on Checking of Sins

Sensing the doubt generated by a surface view of the words of the verse, Sayyidnā Abū-Bakr رضى الله عنه said in a *Khuṭbah* (address): You people recite this verse and use it out of context - that *Al-amr bil-Ma'rūf* (Bidding the Fair) is not required. Understand it very clearly that I have myself heard the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم say that people who see a sin being committed and do not try to stop it (to the best of their ability) then, it is likely that they too are seized by the divine punishment alongwith the actual sinners.

This narration is there in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah. However, the words in Abū Dāwūd appear as follows: those who see an oppressor oppressing and do not stop him from his oppression (to the best of their ability), then, Allah Ta'ālā will seize everyone in punishment.

The Meaning of *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar*

From the details given earlier, we know that it is the duty of a Muslim that he should do what he can to check what is not permissible, or, at the least, show his dislike for it. Let us now find out what is *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar*.

The word, *Ma'rūf* is from *Ma'rifah* and the word, *Munkar* is from *Inkār*. *Ma'rifah* means to know, and to understand and recognize something after deliberation. In contrast, there is *Inkār* which means not to know, and not to understand and recognize something. These words are taken to be antonyms. The Holy Qur'ān says: يَعْرِفُوْنَ نِعْمَتَ اللّٰهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُوْنَهَا (16:83). It means that they recognize the blessings of Allah by seeing the manifestations of His perfect power, but thereafter they deny them as if they do not know them. This tells us that, lexically, *Ma'rūf* signifies something well-recognized while *Munkar* refers to something unrecognized. Keeping this congruity in view, Imām al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī has, in his Mufradāt al-Qur'ān, given the meaning of *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar* as used in the terminology of the Sharī'ah. According to him, *Ma'rūf* refers to what is known to be good in the light of reason (*'Aql*) and revelation (*Shar'*). And *Munkar* means what is strange and unrecognized, that is, what is taken as bad. Therefore, *Al-Amr bil Ma'rūf* comes to

mean bidding toward the Fair, while, *Nahy 'anil-Munkar* signifies forbidding from the Unfair.

There is nothing Legally Unfair in the sayings of the *Mujtahid Imāms*

But here, the use of the words, *Ma'rūf* and *Munkar*, in place of sin and reward or obedience and disobedience, may perhaps be indicating towards the possibility that there can be two opinions in matters which are deep and in problems which require *Ijtihād* due to brevity or ambiguity left in the Qur'ān and Sunnah - the basis on which sayings of Muslim jurists (*fuqahā'*) differ - therefore, they are excluded from this scope. The brilliance of *Ijtihād* done by the great *Mujtāhid Imāms* is an accepted fact among scholars and jurists of Muslim *Ummah*. If two views are different about a religious problem, none of them can be considered to be censurable in Shari'ah[1] (*al-munkar ash-Shar'ī*). In fact, both the sides are included under *Ma'rūf*. In such problems, a person who considers one opinion weightier does not have the right to reject and censure the other in the manner it is done in the case of sin. This is the reason why, despite many differences in matters of *Ijtihad* and opposing opinions, it has not been reported anywhere that the noble *Saḥābah* and *Tābi'īn* ever called each other sinners. Debates, dialogues, polemics - they had all that. They presented their point of view, explained the reasons for their preference and did not hesitate in questioning what others had to say. But, nobody took anyone to be a sinner just because of this difference of opinion.

To put it briefly, it can be said that on occasions where *Ijtihādi* difference exists, every knowledgeable person (having the optimum subject knowledge) has the choice to take a side which is weightier in his sight. This much he can do. But, no one has the right to reject and censure what someone else has done by taking it as *Munkar* (evil and sinful). From here we learn that all those writings which spread mu-

1. It must be noted here that the author is referring to the views expressed by the competent *mujtahids* who are equipped with deep knowledge of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah and have expressed their *bona fide* view after doing their best to reach the truth. Conversely, if an incompetent person, lacking the standard of knowledge required for *ijtihad,* declares a view based on his whims and conjectures, his view cannot be taken as a view based on *ijtihad,* therefore, he cannot claim immunity from '*Nahy 'anil munkar*'. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

tual hatred and hostility in *Ijtihādī* problems and issues are not included under the purview of *Al-Amr bil-Ma'rūf* or *Nahy 'anil-Munkar* (Bidding the Fair and Forbidding the Unfair). Opening a war front on the basis of such religious issues can only be because of unawareness or ignorance.

Verses 106 - 108

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ شَهَـٰدَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ إِذَا حَضَرَ أَحَدَكُمُ ٱلْمَوْتُ
حِينَ ٱلْوَصِيَّةِ ٱثْنَانِ ذَوَا عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ أَوْ ءَاخَرَانِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ إِنْ
أَنتُمْ ضَرَبْتُمْ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ فَأَصَـٰبَتْكُم مُّصِيبَةُ ٱلْمَوْتِ ۚ
تَحْبِسُونَهُمَا مِنۢ بَعْدِ ٱلصَّلَوٰةِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِٱللَّهِ إِنِ ٱرْتَبْتُمْ
لَا نَشْتَرِى بِهِۦ ثَمَنًا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ ۙ وَلَا نَكْتُمُ شَهَـٰدَةَ ٱللَّهِ
إِنَّآ إِذًا لَّمِنَ ٱلْـَٔاثِمِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ فَإِنْ عُثِرَ عَلَىٰٓ أَنَّهُمَا ٱسْتَحَقَّآ
إِثْمًا فَـَٔاخَرَانِ يَقُومَانِ مَقَامَهُمَا مِنَ ٱلَّذِينَ ٱسْتَحَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ
ٱلْأَوْلَيَـٰنِ فَيُقْسِمَانِ بِٱللَّهِ لَشَهَـٰدَتُنَآ أَحَقُّ مِن شَهَـٰدَتِهِمَا وَمَا
ٱعْتَدَيْنَآ إِنَّآ إِذًا لَّمِنَ ٱلظَّـٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾ ذَٰلِكَ أَدْنَىٰٓ أَن يَأْتُوا۟
بِٱلشَّهَـٰدَةِ عَلَىٰ وَجْهِهَآ أَوْ يَخَافُوٓا۟ أَن تُرَدَّ أَيْمَـٰنٌۢ بَعْدَ أَيْمَـٰنِهِمْ ۗ
وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ وَٱسْمَعُوا۟ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِى ٱلْقَوْمَ ٱلْفَـٰسِقِينَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

O those who believe, when death draws near one of you, that is, at the time of making a will, the evidence (recognized) between you shall be of two witnesses from among you, or of two others not from you if you are traveling on the earth and the trauma of death visits you. (Then) you shall detain them after the prayer, if you late some doubt, and they shall swear by Allah, "We shall not take a price for it, even if there be a relative. And we shall not conceal the evidence, (a due) of Allah, in which case we should certainly be among the sinners." [106]

Then, if it is discovered that the two had rendered themselves liable to a sin, then, in their place shall

stand two others closest of those whose right has been taken away, and they shall swear by Allah, "Our evidence is more truthful than their evidence, and we have not transgressed, in which case we should be among the unjust." [107] **Thus it is more likely that they will bear witness in its proper way, or they will fear that oaths will be taken in rebuttal of their oaths. And fear Allah and listen. And Allah does not lead the sinning people to the right path.** [108]

Sequence of Verses

Prior to this, there were injunctions relevant to religious considerations. Now some injunctions relevant to worldly considerations have been mentioned. The hint given is that the way Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy, helps His servants with better life in the Hereafter, He also takes care of better sustenance for them in the present world. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The Background of Revelation

The event in the background of the revelation of the cited verses is that Budayl, a Muslim accompanied by Tamīm and 'Adiyy, who were Christians at that time, travelled to Syria on a business visit. After reaching Syria, Budayl became sick. He made out a list of his things in writing and put it in his baggage. He did not inform his companions of the trip about it. When his sickness became serious, he called his Christian trip companions and made a will before them that they should deliver everything to his heirs. When they returned, they delivered everything to them. But, they took out a silver bowl which was polished with gold, or had gold inlay work on it, from the belongings. When the heirs found the list of things in the baggage left for them by the deceased, they asked the caretakers of the will if the deceased had sold something from the property, or was he very sick which may have compelled him to make unusual expenses. They answered their inquiry in the negative. Finally, the case came up for hearing before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Since the heirs had no witnesses, the two Christians were put under oath. They declared that they had neither committed any breach of trust in what belonged to the deceased, nor had they hidden any of his things. In the end, based on the oath, the verdict was given in their favour. After the passage of some time, it

was found that the two of them had sold that bowl to a goldsmith in Makkah. When asked, they said that they had bought it from the deceased. Since they had no witnesses at the time of purchase, they pleaded, they did not mention it earlier lest they be falsified.

The heirs of the deceased appealed in the court of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Now, contrary to the earlier situation, the executers of the will were claiming to have purchased the missing item while the heirs were denying it. In view of the absence of evidence, two persons closest of the deceased gave a sworn statement that the bowl was owned by the deceased and that the two Christians were liars in their oath. So, the amount of money for which they had sold it (1,000 Dirhams) was made to be handed over to the heirs.

Commentary

These verses are meant to give general instructions to the Muslims with regard to making will before death. The advice given is that the will should be evidenced by witnesses, so that they may prove the will in case of a dispute after the death of the testator. It has also been advised that two pious Muslims are chosen for witnessing the will. However, if the Muslim witnesses are not available, non-Muslim witnesses may also serve the purpose. The words 'two witnesses from you" signify the preference of Muslim witnesses, but the following words "or of two others not from you" point out to the permissibility of non-Muslim witnesses.

Then, the words "if you have some doubt" refers to a situation where the legal heirs of the deceased have a claim against the executors of the will, as in the case of Budayl the heirs claimed that a bowl of silver was delivered by the deceased to the executors. Since, in this case the heirs are the plaintiffs, they should produce witnesses to prove their claim, but on their failure to do so, the defendants, i.e. the trustees are required to declare on oath that they did not commit any breach of trust. For that purpose, the Holy Qur'an advises the judge by saying, 'you shall detain them after the prayer, and they shall swear.

Although it is not legally compulsory to take this oath in the mosque after a prayer, yet the Holy Qur'an has advised to take oath after a prayer, so that the sanctity of time and place may further persuade the people to give a truthful statement.

In the next verse the Holy Qur'an says, "Then, if it is discovered that the two had rendered themselves liable to a sin..." It means that they had given a false evidence, as in the case of Budayl they themselves admitted that the bowl was purchased by them which implied that the property of Budayl contained a bowl and their earlier testimony was false. At this stage they claimed that they had purchased the bowl from Budayl. They should have substantiated this claim by witnesses, but they failed to do so, therefore, the oath was given to the legal heirs of Budayl that no such sale took place to the best of their knowledge. It is this oath of the heirs which has been mentioned in the verse by saying, "then, in their place shall stand two others closest of those whose right has been taken away and they shall swear by Allah..."

Some Rulings

1. The person with whom the deceased leaves his or her property in trust with the request that it be given to someone is called *Waṣiyy* (authorized guardian, executor, trustee, caretaker; plural: *Awṣiyā'*). A *Waṣiyy* can be one individual, or more.

2. That a *Waṣiyy* should be Muslim and just, is better but not necessary, no matter whether the will is being made in journey or at home.

3. In a dispute, the complainant is called the *Mudda'ī* (plaintiff) while the other party is *Mudda'ā 'alayh* (respondent).

4. Witnesses from the Plaintiff are taken first. If he presents them as recognized under the legal norms set by the Sharī'ah of Islam, the case is decided in his favour. If he cannot do that, the Respondent is put on oath and the case is decided in his favour. However, if he denies it, the Plaintiff wins the case.

5. Taking oath at a particular time or place in order to make it more emphatic, as done in the cited verse, depends on the opinion of the judge - it is not required compulsorily. Its cumpulsory nature is not proved from this verse too, while the converse is proved from other verses and *Ḥadīth* reports.

The Witness of a *Kāfir* is Acceptable in the case of another *Kāfir*

In the opening words of the verse (106): يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا شَهَادَةُ بَيْنِكُمْ translated as : 'when death draws near one of you, that is, at the time of making a will, the evidence (recognized) between you shall be of two just witnesses from among you, or of two others not from you,' Muslims have been commanded that at the time death draws near one of them, they should appoint two good and just men from among them as their *Wasiyy* (executor of the will), and if they do not have such people from their own, then, they can have two others (that is, from disbelievers).

It is from here that Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has deduced the ruling that the witness given by disbelievers for each other is permissible. Since the witness of the disbelievers has been declared permissible in the case of Muslims in this verse, as obvious from : اَوْ اٰخَرٰنِ مِنْ غَيْرِكُمْ (or of two others not from you), so the witness of disbelievers for each other is permissible as more suited. But, later on, the witness of the disbelievers for Muslims was abrogated under the authority of the verse: وَاسْتَشْهِدُوْا شَهِيْدَيْنِ مِنْ رِّجَالِكُمْ (And have two witnesses from among your men - 2:282). But, the evidence of disbelievers for each other remains valid as it was. (Qurṭubī & Al-Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān by Jaṣṣāṣ)

The support for the position of Imām Abū Ḥanifah also comes from what a *Ḥadīth* says about a Jew who had committed *Zinā* (adultery). His people smeared his face with black soot and produced him before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Looking at his condition, he asked for the reason. They told him that the man had committed adultery (*Zinā*). After hearing the testimony of the witnesses, he gave orders that he be stoned to death (*Rajm*). (Jaṣṣāṣ)

Two Words, Two Rules

1. The word, تَحْبِسُوْنَهُمَا (You shall detain them) in the context of this verse (106) tells us that a person who (genuinely) owes something to someone (having the right of return), the later can have him detained for the retrieval of his right, if and when needed. (Qurṭubī)

2. The word, "*Ṣalāh*" in : مِنْۢ بَعْدِ الصَّلٰوةِ (after the prayer) means the Ṣalāh or prayer of *'Aṣr*. That this time has been chosen is because the people of the Book held it in esteem. Telling a lie at this time was particularly prohibited among them. This tells us that the placing of the

restriction of special time or place for taking a solemn and sacred oath (*Taghlīẓ*) is permissible. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 109 - 110

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ فَيَقُوْلُ مَاذَآ اُجِبْتُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا ؕ
اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ ﴿۱۰۹﴾ اِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ اذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِيْ عَلَيْكَ وَعَلٰى وَالِدَتِكَ ۘ اِذْ اَيَّدْتُّكَ بِرُوْحِ
الْقُدُسِ ۣ تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا ۚ وَاِذْ عَلَّمْتُكَ الْكِتٰبَ
وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَالتَّوْرٰىةَ وَالْاِنْجِيْلَ ۚ وَاِذْ تَخْلُقُ مِنَ الطِّيْنِ كَهَيْـَٔةِ
الطَّيْرِ بِاِذْنِيْ فَتَنْفُخُ فِيْهَا فَتَكُوْنُ طَيْرًا ۢ بِاِذْنِيْ وَتُبْرِئُ الْاَكْمَهَ
وَالْاَبْرَصَ بِاِذْنِيْ ۚ وَاِذْ تُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى بِاِذْنِيْ وَاِذْ كَفَفْتُ بَنِيْٓ
اِسْرَآءِيْلَ عَنْكَ اِذْ جِئْتَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْهُمْ اِنْ
هٰذَآ اِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿۱۱۰﴾

(Remember) the day Allah will assemble the messengers and will say to them, "How were you responded to?" They will say, "we have no knowledge. Surely You alone have the full knowledge of all that is unseen." [109]

When Allah will say, "O 'Īsā, son of Maryam, remember My blessing upon you and upon your mother, when I supported you with the Holy Spirit. You spoke to the people when in the cradle and while middle-aged. And when I taught you the Book and the Wisdom, and the Torah and the Injīl. And when you created from the clay something in the shape of a bird, then you blew in it, and it became a bird with My will; and you cured the born-blind and the leper with My will; and when you raised the dead with My will. And when I kept the children of Isrā'īl away from you when you came to them with clear signs and the disbelievers among them said, "this is nothing but a clear magic." [110]

The Linkage of Verses

Earlier, mention was made of various injunctions. In between came inducements to put these in practice alongwith warnings against opposing them. Now it is to re-emphasize the approach that people are reminded of the frightening happenings of the Day of *Qiyamah* so that obedience is promoted and antagonism is checked. This is the prevailing style of the Holy Qur'an. Then, towards the closing stages of the Surah, there is that dialogue with the people of the Book which has also appeared earlier through several verses where the purpose is to aquaint the people of the Book with facts about Sayyidna 'Isa عليه السلام, facts which affirm his being a servant of Allah and negate the erroneous ascribing of godhood to him (though, the actual locale of this address will be the Last Day of *Qiyamah*).

Commentary

The First Question Asked of Prophets عليهم السلام on the Last Day

Verse 109 opens with the statement: يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُ اللّٰهُ الرُّسُلَ '(Remember) the day Allah will assemble the messengers' which is ominous. Though the day of *Qiyamah* will be the Day of Doom when all human beings born from the beginning to the end shall be standing on open grounds. Human beings, no matter what their region, country or time, shall all be present on those grounds and there will come that hour of ultimate reckoning for a whole life-time of deeds. But, in the statement quoted above, mentioned particularly are the blessed prophets whom Allah will assemble on that day of reckoning. The sense is that, as for assembling, the whole world will be assembled, but the first question asked will be from the prophets, may peace be upon them all - so that the whole creation of Allah may see that, on that day, no one is exempted from reckoning. Then, the question asked of the prophets will be: مَاذَآ أُجِبْتُمْ (How were you responded to?). It means when you invited your communities towards Allah and His true religion, how did they react to your call. Did they act as they were commanded to? Or, did they say no to the call and opposed it?

Though the question will be addressed to the prophets, but it would really be beamed at their communities. In other words, the prophets will be the first ones to testify about the good or bad deeds done by their communities. And for them this would be a trying time,

for, on their part, they would be hoping for the intercession of their prophets to rescue them from this nerve shattering experience, while, on the other hand, there would come this question addressed to their prophets themselves requiring them to explain the conduct of their communities. Under such circumstances, it is obvious that prophets would never say anything but the truth, so the criminals and sinners will have apprehensions that the prophets themselves will become witnesses to their wrong-doings. Who, then, they would wonder, was now left to intercede on their behalf?

The answer that the prophets will give will be: قَالُوْا لَا عِلْمَ لَنَا ۖ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ (We have no knowledge. Surely You have the full knowledge of all that is unseen).

The Removal of a Doubt

As for the people of every community who were born after passing away of their prophets from this world, this answer given by the prophets is correct and clear in that they are unaware of the actual state of their faith and deeds - because no one has the knowledge of the unseen except Allah. But, the question arises with regard to the great majority of people within the community, who professed belief at the hands of their prophet as a result of his work among them, and proved that they kept following before their eyes what they were asked to follow. Similarly, there were disbelievers who did not listen to the prophets, even treated them with hostility. How would it be correct to say about them that 'we have no knowledge of their faith and deeds.'? It appears in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīt that Imām Rāzī has answered this doubt by saying: There are two separate things here. One is *'Ilm* which means perfect certitude, while the other is *Ẓann* which means conjecture or weighty likelihood. And it is obvious that if a person can, despite his being sitting next to the other person, testify about his faith and deed, then, it will be on no other basis but that of *Ẓann* or conjecture or likelihood. Otherwise, real faith (*'Īmān*) is a secret of the heart which no one can find out with any certitude without a Divine revelation. Every religious community had their groups of hypocrites who obviously did profess faith and did follow what they were commanded to follow. But, their hearts had no faith in them nor they had the real feeling and drive for carrying out those commands. All they

had was hypocricy. But, like all laws, religious laws too were applied on what was visible from the outside. Anyone who called himself a believer, followed Divinely ordained laws, and no word or deed from him or her stood proved against faith and belief, was a good believer in the sight of the prophets and their believing communities. Whether someone was a true believer at heart, or simply a hypocrite, it did not count for they had no choice in the matter. Therefore, it was said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

نَحْنُ نَحْكُمُ بِالظَّوَاهِرِ وَاللّٰهُ مُتَوَلِّي السَّرَائِر

We judge on the basis of outward deeds while Allah is (Himself) the custodian of the secrets (of the hearts).

Under this rule, the noble prophets, their deputies and the learned could confirm, at least in the mortal world, that someone was a true believer as based on their favourable opinion deduced from his outward deeds. But, that mortal world where everything revolved round opinions and conjectures is all gone. This is the *Yowm al-Ḥashr*, the fateful day of Resurrection when the dead shall rise and where things will be sorted out and realities will be unfolded. Criminals will stand on trial. People will witness against them. If they do not confess, other witnesses will be brought in, very special, and very official witnesses. With mouths and tongues silenced, the wrong-doer's hands and legs and the skin will be asked to testify. They will tell everything about what they did: اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (That Day We shall set a seal on their mouths while their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did -36:65). Human beings will then surely find out that parts of their own body could also act as secret service agents when summoned to do so by the Lord of the universes. After such disarming testimony no denial will remain possible.

In short, that would be a state of being in which no judgement will be based on opinion, estimate and conjecture. Instead, certitude will be the order of the day. And as we have just seen that no one has the real knowledge about anyone's faith and belief except Allah, therefore, when the prophets will be asked on the day of Resurrection: مَاذَآ اُجِبْتُمْ (How were you responded to?), they would recognize the reality behind the question, that the question is not being asked in the world of our

experience where it could be answered by conjecture, instead, that question was being asked in the horrendous scenario of the Day of Resurrection where nothing other than certitude was going to work. Therefore, their answer: 'We have no knowledge' about it, that is, they do not have that certain knowledge needed to answer the question, is right and correct.

The Answer Shows the Affection Prophets have for People

We now know that the prophets did have some opinion about the acceptance or rejection of their call by their communities and knew facts about their obedience or disobedience. On that basis, they could have at least mentioned their apparent attitude as part of their answer to the question - and could have referred the certainty in knowledge to the sole domain of Almighty Allah. But, what we see here is that the prophets said nothing about what they knew, nor did they mention any events which had passed before them. They simply resigned these to the Divine knowledge and chose to remain silent.

This was a great demonstration of consideration. Prophets are very affectionate to their people, and to the creation of Allah in general. They would not elect to say something as an adverse comment against their community on their own, lest their people are in trouble. If they had to say so, they would. But, here they had the excuse of not having certain knowledge. Using this legitimate excuse to their advantage, they could have avoided saying anything against their communities - and so they did.

Five Questions on the Day of Resurrection

Opened through this verse is a window to *Qiyāmah*, the fateful Day of Doom. Stationed there on the grandstands of reckoning are the highest and the dearest of Allah, His noble messengers and prophets, all in awe and reverence. Think of them and think of what would be happening to others. Therefore, we should start worrying about that Day right from this day. This little time of our life is a blessing in our hands and should be devoted to getting ready for the ultimate accounting. In a *Ḥadīth* of Tirmidhī, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said:

لَاتَزُوْلُ قَدَمَا ابْنِ اٰدَمَ یَوْمَ الْقِیَامَةِ حَتّٰی یُسْئَلَ عَنْ خَمْسٍ: عَنْ عُمُرِہٖ فِیْمَا

أَفْنَاهُ وَعَنْ شَبَابِهِ فِيْمَا أَبْلَاهُ وَعَنْ مَالِهِ مِنْ أَيْنَ اكْتَسَبَهُ وَأَيْنَ أَنْفَقَهُ وَ مَاذَا عَمِلَ بِمَا عَلِمَ .

> No son of Adam will move a step on the Day of *Qiyāmah* until he is asked five questions: (1) About his age: In what did he use it up? (2) And about his youth: In what did he spend it? (3) And about his wealth: From where did he earn it? (4) And where did he spend it? (5) And what was it that he did following that which he knew?

Great is the mercy and affection of Allah Ta'ālā. He puts us to a test and He Himself tells His people about the questions asked during the test. The task was done by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who told his *Ummah* how to appear in this test. Now, for them, there is nothing left to do but to resolve these questions, find their answers and solutions and keep that preserved (for the day of trial). So, if someone still fails, even after being told what will be in the test, fairly in advance, who else could be more deprived than him?

A Particular Question Asked from Sayyidnā 'Īsā

The first verse (109) referred to prophets in general where a question was asked and its reply was given. In the second verse (100), and after that, in all the nine verses appearing through the end of the Sūrah, the text talks about Sayyidnā 'Īsā, the last prophet of the Banī Isrā'īl, and mentions some blessings of Allah on him. A particular question asked from him on the Day of Resurrection (*Al-Maḥshar*) along with its answer has also been mentioned which follows in verses coming next.

The purpose of the question asked and the answer given is to show this disturbing sight to Banī Isrā'īl and to the entire creation. When on the plains of the *Ḥashr*, the one who is called, The Spirit of Allah (*Ruḥullāh*) and The Word of Allah (*Kalimatullāh*) is asked the question as to why did his people make him a partner of God, he would be upset despite his being a great prophet and would hasten to plead his being free from what his followers did, not in one way, but in more than one. First he said: سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْٓ اَنْ اَقُوْلَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِحَقٍّ (Pure are You, it does not behove me to say what is not right for me - 116).

Then, he pleads his innocence from another angle when he makes

Almighty Allah his witness and says: 'Had I said it, You would have known it. You know what is in my heart and I do not know what is in Your's. You alone have the full knowledge of what is unseen - 116.' After this overture, he answers the main question.

The Answer given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā before His Lord

His answer was that he had taught his people precisely what he was commanded to teach, that is: أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ وَرَبَّكُمْ (Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord - 117). Then, after this teaching, as long as he lived among those people, he was a witness to what they said and did (upto that time, none of them said things like that about him). Then, after he was raised by his Lord towards Him, these people remained under His watch, and it is He who knew their words and deeds fully and truly.

The Mention of Special Blessings on Sayyidnā 'Īsā

Before these verses where questions asked and their answers given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā have been mentioned, special blessings which were bestowed upon him as his miracles have also been described (110). Thus, by bringing the bestowal of blessings and the scenario of answerability in juxtaposition, both groups of Banī Isrā'īl have been admonished, one of which insulted, accused and harrassed him while the other took him as God or son of God. By describing the blessings, the first group has been admonished while, by mentioning the questions and answers, it is the second group which has been warned. The detailed description of blessings which appears in many verses has one sentence which is worth special consideration, the sentence where it is said: تُكَلِّمُ النَّاسَ فِي الْمَهْدِ وَكَهْلًا (You spoke to the people when in the cradle and while middle-aged). In other words, a special miracle given to Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیه السلام was that he talked to people in a state when he is a child, and he also does that in a state when he is middle-aged.

As for the first spectacle, it is obvious that it is a miracle and certainly a special blessing of Allah. In the early post-birth stage, children cannot talk (meaningfully). If a child were to start talking in the cradle or on the laps of the mother, that would be a particular distinction of the child. As for talking 'while middle-aged,' it does not seem to be worth mentioning, for everyone talks at this age. But, for a moment, think of the conditions surrounding Sayyidnā 'Īsā and you will

realize that this too was a miracle - because Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام was raised from the earth before reaching middle-age. Now that he would talk to people on the earth after reaching his middle-age can become possible only when he returns to this world - as is the collective belief of Muslims which stands proved on the basis of clear statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It is from here that we find out that in the manner it was a miracle of Sayyidnā 'Īsā that he talked when a child, so in the same manner, talking while middle-aged because of his return to this world is nothing but a miracle.

Verses 111 - 115

وَاِذْ اَوْحَيْتُ اِلَى الْحَوَارِيّٖنَ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا بِيْ وَبِرَسُوْلِيْ ۚ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا
وَاشْهَدْ بِاَنَّنَا مُسْلِمُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾ اِذْ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ هَلْ يَسْتَطِيْعُ رَبُّكَ اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ ؕ
قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوْا نُرِيْدُ اَنْ نَّاْكُلَ
مِنْهَا وَتَطْمَئِنَّ قُلُوْبُنَا وَنَعْلَمَ اَنْ قَدْ صَدَقْتَنَا وَنَكُوْنَ عَلَيْهَا
مِنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ اللّٰهُمَّ رَبَّنَآ اَنْزِلْ
عَلَيْنَا مَآئِدَةً مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ تَكُوْنُ لَنَا عِيْدًا لِّاَوَّلِنَا وَاٰخِرِنَا وَاٰيَةً
مِّنْكَ ۚ وَارْزُقْنَا وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ قَالَ اللّٰهُ اِنِّيْ مُنَزِّلُهَا
عَلَيْكُمْ فَمَنْ يَّكْفُرْ بَعْدُ مِنْكُمْ فَاِنِّيْٓ اُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا لَّآ اُعَذِّبُهٗٓ
اَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١١٥﴾

And when I enjoined upon the disciples, "Believe in Me and in My Messenger," they said, "We believed. And be witness that we are the submitting ones." [111]

When the disciples said, "O 'Īsā son of Maryam, can your Lord send down to us spread stands of 'Mā'idah' (a sheet generally spread on the floor to serve food; also used to mean food so served) from the heavens?" He said, "Fear Allah if you are believers." [112] **They said, "We want that we eat from it, and our hearts be satisfied, and we may know for sure that you have told us**

the truth, and we may become witnesses to it." [113] **'Īsā son of Maryam said, "O Allah, our Lord, send down to us spread from heaven which may be a happy occasion for us for all our generations present and future, and a sign from you, and give us provisions. And You are the best Giver of provisions."** [114]

Allah said, "I am going to send it down to you; but whoever from you disbelieves after that, I shall give him a punishment I shall not give to anyone in the worlds." [115]

Commentary

A True Believer Should Not Demand Miracles

When the disciples of Sayyidnā 'Īsā asked him to make 'Mā'idah' (food-spread) come down from the heavens, he replied by saying: قَالَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (Fear Allah if you are believers). This tells us that it does not behove a faith-bearing servant of Allah that he should test Him by making such requests. Rather than demand what is supernatural, he should seek things, like sustenance, through sources naturally appointed for him.

The Better the Blessing, the Worse the Curse of Ingratitude

From the words of the verse 115: فَإِنِّيْٓ أُعَذِّبُهٗ عَذَابًا لَّآ أُعَذِّبُهٗٓ أَحَدًا مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (I shall give him a punishment I shall not give to anyone in the worlds), we learn that in situations when the blessing of Allah is extra-ordinary and unique, the emphasis on the gratitude for it should be far above the ordinary. As for the punishment of ingratitude, that too will be extra-ordinary and unique.

Whether or not the 'Mā'idah' (food-spread) came down from the heaven is something commentators differ in. The majority of them hold that it did. Accordingly, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Ammār ibn Yāsir as in a *Ḥadīth* of Tirmidhī, that 'Mā'idah' did come from the heavens which included bread and meat. It also appears in this *Ḥadīth* that some of those people committed a breach of trust, and put it off for the next day as well. As a result, they were transformed into monkeys and swines. (May Allah keep us protected from His wrath). This very *Ḥadīth* also tells us that they ate from it as they wanted to do as mentioned in the word, *'na'kulū'* (we eat) - however, storing it for future use was prohibited. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 116 - 118

وَاِذْ قَالَ اللّٰهُ يٰعِيْسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَاَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُوْنِيْ
وَاُمِّيَ اِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ سُبْحٰنَكَ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْۤ اَنْ
اَقُوْلَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِحَقٍّ ؕ اِنْ كُنْتُ قُلْتُهٗ فَقَدْ عَلِمْتَهٗ ؕ تَعْلَمُ
مَا فِيْ نَفْسِيْ وَلَاۤ اَعْلَمُ مَا فِيْ نَفْسِكَ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ عَلَّامُ الْغُيُوْبِ
﴿١١٦﴾ مَا قُلْتُ لَهُمْ اِلَّا مَاۤ اَمَرْتَنِيْ بِهٖۤ اَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ رَبِّيْ
وَرَبَّكُمْ ۚ وَكُنْتُ عَلَيْهِمْ شَهِيْدًا مَّا دُمْتُ فِيْهِمْ ۚ فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِيْ
كُنْتَ اَنْتَ الرَّقِيْبَ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَاَنْتَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ﴿١١٧﴾
اِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ ۚ وَاِنْ تَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ فَاِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ
الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿١١٨﴾

And when Allah said, "O 'Īsā son of Maryam, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as gods beside Allah?" He said, "Pure are You, it does not behove me to say what is not right for me. Had I said it, You would have known it. You know what is in my heart and I do not know what is in Your's. You alone have the full knowledge of all that is unseen. [116] **I have not said to them anything but what You have ordered me to, that is, 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord' and I was a witness over them as long as I was with them. But when You picked me up You were the One watching over them. And You are a witness over everything.** [117] **If You punish them, they are Your slaves. And if You forgive them, You are the Mighty, the Wise."** [118]

Commentary

Important Notes

1. In the first verse (116), the question asked and the answer given by Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام establishes that Allah alone has the full knowledge of everything, therefore, He is not asking Sayyidnā 'Īsā because He does not know. In fact, the purpose is to admonish his people who call them Christians that the one they are taking to be god is him-

self confessing to his servitude quite contrary to the belief they hold - and that he is free of all their accusations. (Ibn Kathīr)

2. About the sentence: فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي كُنْتَ أَنْتَ الرَّقِيبَ عَلَيْهِمْ (And when You picked me up You were the One watching over them) in verse 117, a detailed discussion of the subject of the 'death' or 'having been raised toward Allah' has appeared in the Commentary on Sūrah Āl-'Imrān under verse 3:55: إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ (I am to take you in full and lift you towards Me). It may be seen there [Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, English Translation, Volume II, pages 76-81]. As for using the verse 117 (فَلَمَّا تَوَفَّيْتَنِي : *'falamma tawaffaitanī'*) to reject his ascension to heavens and to establish his natural death is not a sound inference, because the time of this conversation shall be the day of *Qiyāmah* - and at that time, after he has descended down from the heaven, he would have had his natural and real death. Therefore, as reported by Ibn Kathīr on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, the prophets and their communities will be summoned. Then, Sayyidnā 'Īsā will be called. Then, Allah Ta'ālā will remind him of His blessings and drawing him closer, He will say, 'O 'Īsā son of Maryam: اُذْكُرْ نِعْمَتِي عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَىٰ وَالِدَتِكَ : Remember My blessing upon you and upon your mother.' Then, in the end, He would say: يٰعِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ ءَأَنْتَ قُلْتَ لِلنَّاسِ اتَّخِذُونِي وَأُمِّيَ إِلٰهَيْنِ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ (O 'Īsā son of Maryam, did you say to the people: Take me and my mother as gods beside Allah?). Sayyidnā 'Īsā will deny it saying that he did not. Then, the question will be asked from the Christians. They will say, 'yes, this is what he had ordered us to do.' After that, they will be driven towards Hell.

3. As for the statement beginning with the words: إِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ (If You punish them, they are Your slaves ...) appearing in the last verse (118), it means that Allah does not bring undue hardship on His servants, therefore, if punishment does come to them, it will only be just, right and wise. And should He forgive them, then, this forgiveness too will not be a matter of not being able to do otherwise - because He is Mighty, fully-capable and overpowering, from whose reach and control no wrong-doer can escape. And since He is Wise too, therefore, it is also not possible that He would let a wrong-doer walk away just for no reason. Thus, the Divine verdict in the case of wrong-doers will be absolutely wise and masterly. Since this saying of Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه

السلام will take place in the *Maḥshar* (the day of Resurrection) - where no intercession on behalf of the disbelievers, or appeal of mercy for them, will be entertained - therefore, Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام has not referred to the Divine attributes of *Ghafūrur-Raḥīm* (the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful) in place of "*Al-'Azīz Al-Ḥakīm*" (the Mighty, the Wise) of the text. This stands in contrast with what Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had said to his Lord during his life in this world: رَبِّ إِنَّهُنَّ أَضْلَلْنَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ (That is, O my Lord, these [idols] have made many of the people go astray. Henceforth, whoever has followed me is one of mine. And whoever has disobeyed me, so then, You are the Most-Forgiving, the Very-Merciful - 14:36). It means that the likelihood still exists that Allah may, in His mercy, give them the Taufīq later on to repent and return to the path of truth and thereby forgive their sins. (Shabbīr Aḥmad Usmānī - Notes)

Ibn Kathīr reports a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه that once the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم spent a whole night reciting one single verse. And that verse was: إِنْ تُعَذِّبْهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ (If You punish them, then, they are Your slaves - 118). When morning came, I said: Yā Rasūl Allah, you kept reciting just this verse. You made your *Rukū'* with it and you made your *Sujūd* with it, right upto this break of dawn. He said: I prayed to my *Rabb* to bless me with the station of intercession (*Shafā'ah*), which He granted. *Inshallāh*, it is going to be for one who has never associated anyone with Allah Ta'ālā.

According to another narration, after reciting the verse cited above, he raised his hands facing the heaven and said: اَللّٰهُمَّ أُمَّتِي (*Allahumma Ummatī*) that is, 'O Allah, mercy - mercy on my people.' And then he wept. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā sent angel Jibra'īl to ask why would he weep. He told the angel what he had said. Then, Allah Ta'ālā asked angel Jibra'īl to go back and tell Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم that He will please him soon in his concern for his people and will not let him be unhappy.

Verses 119 - 120

قَالَ اللّٰهُ هٰذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ ۭ لَهُمْ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ
مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوْا

عَنْهُ ط ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١١٩﴾ لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ
وَمَا فِيْهِنَّ ط وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٢٠﴾

Allah said, "This is a day the truth of the truthful shall bring benefit to them. For them are gardens beneath which rivers flow where they shall be living for ever. Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. That is the great achievement. [119]

To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and of whatever lies therein. And He is powerful over everything. [120]

The Linkage of Verses

The first two sections (*Rukū'*) appearing earlier describe some of the happenings on the day of *Qiyāmah* such as the reckoning, the questions and their answers. Mentioned now is the outcome of the probe and reckoning of that fateful day.

Commentary

Notes

1. Verse 119 opens with the words: قَالَ اللّٰهُ هٰذَا يَوْمُ يَنْفَعُ الصّٰدِقِيْنَ صِدْقُهُمْ (Allah said, "This is a day the truth of the truthful shall bring benefit to them). Generally, what is according to what has happened is called truth while that which is not according to what has happened is referred to as false or a lie. But, according to the Qur'ān and Sunnah, *ṣidq* (truth) and *kidhb* (lie) are general, that is, they refer to both words and deeds. As such, given here is a *Ḥadīth* in which counter-factual deed has been called *kidhb* (lie): مَنْ تَحَلّٰى بِمَا لَمْ يُعْطَ كَانَ كَلَابِسِ ثَوْبَيْ زُوْرٍ [that is, whoever adorns himself (or herself) with what has not been given to him (or her) (that is, claims a quality or deed not in him or her) then, it is as if he has put on two garbs of a lie - Mishkāt].

There is another *Ḥadīth* in which one who makes Ṣalāh with care and concern, whether in public or in private, has been called a true servant of Allah:

اِنَّ الْعَبْدَ اِذَا صَلّٰى فِى الْعَلَانِيَةِ فَاَحْسَنَ وَصَلّٰى فِى السِّرِّ فَاَحْسَنَ قَالَ اللّٰهُ

تَعَالٰى هٰذَا عَبْدِىْ حَقًّا

A person who performs Ṣalāh openly, then, does it well; and when performs it in private, then, does it well, then, Allah Ta'ālā says: 'This is My servant - in truth.' - Mishkāt.

2. About the statement: رضى الله عنهم ورضوا عنه (Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - 119), it appears in *Ḥadīth* that, after having blessed true believers with *Jannah* (Paradise), Allah Ta'ālā will say: The real blessing is that I am pleased with you and now I shall never be displeased with you.

3. The words appearing after that are: ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ (That is the great achievement). Indeed, so it is. When *Allah Jalla Sha'nuhu*, the Master, the Creator is pleased with you, what else could it be?

فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ اَوَّلَهٗ وَاٰخِرَهٗ

All praises are for Allah from the beginning to the end.

The Commentary
on
Sūrah Al-Mā'idah
ends here.

Sūrah Al-An'ām

(The Cattle)

[Sūratul-An'ām was revealed in Makkah and it has 165 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 5

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمٰتِ
وَالنُّوْرَ ط ثُمَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُوْنَ ﴿١﴾ هُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ
مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰى اَجَلًا ط وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُوْنَ
﴿٢﴾ وَهُوَ اللّٰهُ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَفِى الْاَرْضِ ط يَعْلَمُ سِرَّكُمْ
وَجَهْرَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾ وَمَا تَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِ
رَبِّهِمْ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ ﴿٤﴾ فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا
جَآءَهُمْ ط فَسَوْفَ يَاْتِيْهِمْ اَنْۢبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

All praise belongs to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made darkness and light, yet those who disbelieve equate (others) with their Lord. [1] **He is the one who created you from clay, then destined a term. And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt.** [2] **He is Allah in the heavens and the earth. He knows what you conceal and what you reveal and He knows what you earn.** [3] **And there does not come to them a sign from the signs of their Lord, but they keep turning away from it.** [4] **So, they have belied the truth when it came to them. Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at.** [5]

Commentary

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه has said that one of the distinctions of Sūrah Al-An'ām is that the whole of it, except some *'Āyāt*, was revealed at one time in Makkah with the complement of seventy thousand angels following it with recitation of the name of Allah. Early *Tafsīr* authorities Mujāhid, al-Kalbi, Qatādah and others have said more or less the same thing.

Abū Isḥāq Al-Asfrā'inī has said that this Sūrah consists of all principles and subsidiaries of Tauḥīd (Oneness of Allah). This Sūrah has been prefaced with: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (*Al-Ḥamdulillah*) whereby people have been told that all praises belong to Allah. The purpose is to educate and help people get the right perspective - that Allah needs no praise from anyone, whether or not anyone praises Him, He is, in terms of His own intrinsic perfection, by Himself, the Praised One. By bringing in the sentence which follows immediately, which mentions the creation of the heavens and the earth and the darkness and the light, given there is the very proof of His being the Praised One. Isn't it that the Being which holds such Power and Wisdom would have to be the One deserving of all praise?

In this verse, '*samāwāt*' (heavens) has been mentioned in the plural while *'arḍ* (earth), in the singular - though, in another verse (65:12), earth has been identified as being seven like the heavens. Perhaps, it is indicative of the mutual distinction the seven heavens have in terms of their form and attributes while the seven earths are like each other, therefore, they were taken as one in number. (Maẓharī)

Similarly, by mentioning '*ẓulumāt*' (darkness, or layers of darkness) in the plural, and '*nūr*' (light) in the singular, the indication given may be that *nūr* or light signifies the correct way and the straight path - and that is just one, while *ẓulumāt*, or many layers of darkness, signifies the path of error - and their number runs in thousands. (Maẓharī & al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

Also noticeable here is that the origination of the heavens and the earth has been expressed through the word, '*khalaqa*' (created) while that of darkness and light with the word, '*ja'ala*' (made). The hint implied is that darkness and light are not independent and self-existent like the heavens and the earth, instead, they are contingents and at-

tributes. And *zulumāt* (darkness) has been given precedence over *nūr* (light) perhaps because *zulumāt* is basic to this world while *nūr* is associated with particulars - when they are there, there is light; and when they are not there, there is darkness.

By pointing out to the reality of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) and its open proof in this verse the purpose is to warn all those peoples who do not simply believe in *Tauḥīd*, or have forsaken the reality of *Tauḥīd* despite professing it.

The Magians (*Majūs*) believe in two creators, *Yazdān* and *Ahriman* (or *Ahraman*). *Yazdān*, according to them, is the creator of good and *Ahriman*, the creator of evil. They also identify these as (the principles of) light and darkness.

The polytheists in India take an incredibly high number of gods as partners in the divinity of God. The Aryā Samājists, despite acknowledging *Tauḥīd*, take spirit and matter to be infinitely pre-existent, and independent of the power and creation of God, whereby they have moved way away from the reality of *Tauḥīd*. Similarly, the Christians who, despite professing the creed of *Tauḥīd*, started taking Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and his blessed mother as partners in the divinity of God - and then, in order to prop their belief in one God, they had to rely on the irrational theory of Unity in Trinity. As for the disbelievers and polytheists of Arabia, they demonstrated such philanthropy in dishing out Godhood that, according to them, every piece of rock on a hill could be good enough to become an object of worship for the whole humankind! Thus, the wonderful human being whom Allah had made to be the noblest of His creation, someone whom the whole universe was to serve, went so astray from the right path that he took - not just the moon, the sun, the stars, but the fire, water, trees and rocks too - even crawling insects as objects of prostration and worship, providers of needs and resolvers of problems.

By saying in this verse of the Holy Qur'ān that Allah Ta'ālā is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and He is the Maker of darkness and light, all such false notions have been refuted - when He is the sole Creator and Maker of everything, ascribing partners to His Divinity makes no sense.

In the first verse, by saying that all those great bodies of things in this big universe created by Allah Taʻālā on Whom they depend, an open and correct lesson has been given to all human beings. After that, in other verses which follow, human beings have been told that their very own being is a small universe. If one were to make a start from this point, right from the beginning to the end - birth, living, death among a great mesh of internal dimensions and distances - it would show that the belief in the Oneness of Allah is a reality all too clear. It is about this that the verse said: هُوَ الَّذِىْ خَلَقَكُمْ مِّنْ طِيْنٍ ثُمَّ قَضٰٓى اَجَلًا (He is the One who created you from clay, then destined a term). The verse is saying that Allah is the One who created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام with clay, and then, gave him life - and common human food comes from the moist substance of clay, and from food the sperm, and from the sperm comes the creation of the human being.

Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā al-Ashʻarī رضى الله عنه says that he has heard from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah Taʻālā created Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام from a particular blend of clay included wherein are essential ingredients of the whole earth. This is the reason why the children of Ādam are different in colour, shape, morals and habits with some black or white or red, and some hard or soft or good-natured or evil-tempered. (Maẓharī, from a narration of Ibn ʻAdiyy, with good authority)

This was about the human origin. After that, mentioned here are the two stages at the end. One of these is the personal end of a human being which is called death. The other stage is the combined end of the entire humankind along with that of all cosmic servants waiting on them, which is known as the *Qiyāmah* (the day of Doom). The expression - 'the personal end of a human being' - is used here because Allah Taʻālā says: ثُمَّ قَضٰٓى اَجَلًا that is, after the birth of a human being, Allah Taʻālā destined a term for his or her life (on the earth). Reaching the completion of this term is death - though human beings do not know it - but, the angels do. In fact, a human being too, in a way, knows death as incidents of the children of Ādam dying all around, everywhere, all the time, are common experience.

After that, comes the mention of the end of the whole world, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, in the following words: وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهٗ, that is, there is yet another term which stands fixed and which is known to Allah

alone. The full knowledge of this 'term' has not been given to any angel, or human being.

Summing up in a sequence, we can say that, in the first verse, we have been told about the 'big universe', that is, the whole wide world, which has been created and made by Allah Ta'ālā. Then, in the second verse, very similarly, we have been told that the 'small universe', that is, the human beings, have also been created by Allah. Then, it is to shake human beings out of their negligence that they have been told that every human being has a particular age, after which death is certain. This is a constant fact of life observed by human beings all the time. The words: وَاَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى عِنْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تَمْتَرُوْنَ (And the fixed term lies with Him, yet you are in doubt) carry the instruction that using the personal death of a human being as the proof of the general and collective death of the whole world system, that is, the *Qiyāmah*, is something very natural and logical. Therefore, there is absolutely no doubt about the coming of the *Qiyāmah* (the much publicized but least believed 'Apocalypse' of the West). Therefore, towards the end of the verse (2), the text wonders as to why would people keep doubting the coming of *Qiyāmah* which stands proved so clearly.

The third verse contains the consequential outcome of what was said in the first two verses. It declares that Allah is the only Being who is worthy of worship and obedience in all the heavens and the earth, and He is the One who knows everything human beings conceal or reveal and, particularly, everything they say or do.

The fourth verse carries a complaint against the anti-truth doggedness and obstinacy of the chronically heedless human race by saying: وَمَا تَاْتِيْهِمْ مِّنْ اٰيَةٍ مِّنْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ اِلَّا كَانُوْا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِيْنَ that is, despite the many clear proofs and open signs of the Oneness of Allah, the dissenters and rejectionists among human beings have taken to a way of their own, using which, they would turn their faces away from whatever sign is shown to them for their guidance, without ever paying the least attention to it.

In the fifth and the last verse here, further details of this heedlessness have been indicated through some events. It was said: فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them). The word, '*Al-Ḥaqq*' (the truth) here, could mean the Qur'ān - and the

blessed person of the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم also.

The reason is that he lived his whole life among these Arab tribes. He grew up from a child into a young man and from his youth into his later years right before their eyes. They also knew fully well that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had remained absolutely untaught by any human teacher, so much so that he could not write even his name by himself. The whole Arabia knew him by his appellation of *Ummiyy* (unlettered, unschooled). For forty years, this was him amongst them. He never demonstrated any marked interest in poetry (a traditional distinction of the age) nor he had any aptitude for formal education and learning. Then, after having completed his forty years, there came a sudden change, an instant flowering of the unimaginable. His blessed tongue became such fountainhead of insights and realities, learning and arts that went on to disarm the best minds of the world. He challenged every eloquent and learned master of words in Arabia to match the Word brought by him. But his antagonists, who would have not hesitated to sacrifice anything they had - life, wealth, honour, children, family, anything, anytime - just to defeat him, did not have the courage to accept his challenge and, at the least, produce one *'Āyah* (verse) like the *'Āyah* of the Holy Qur'ān.

Thus, the very presence of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the Glorious Qur'ān, was a great sign of irrefutable legitimacy. In addition to that, there were thousands of miracles and open signs which came to pass at his blessed hands and which cannot be denied by any sane person. But, those people belied all such signs totally. Therefore, it was said in the verse: فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوْا بِالْحَقِّ لَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ (So, they have belied the truth when it came to them).

Now, pointed out at the conclusion of the verse is the sad end of their effort to falsify truth: فَسَوْفَ يَأْتِيْهِمْ اَنْبٰٓؤُا مَا كَانُوْا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُوْنَ (Now, there shall come to them the full account of what they have been laughing at). It means that right now these people who are heedless to their fate mock at the miracles and commandments of Allah brought by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and at the all true message that there is a *Qiyāmah* (Doomsday) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter), but very soon will come the time when all these realities will be before their eyes. There will be a *Qiyāmah* in fact. There will be a Reckoning (*Ḥisāb*) when everyone will

have to account for one's faith and deed - and everyone shall get the reward or punishment for what he or she has done. But, believing and confessing at that time is not going to work for them because that will be no day of deeds - rather, that day will be the day of Retribution. The time to think is now. Allah Almighty has given the respite - a God-sent piece of luck, so to say. Act now, for it is by having faith alone that you will succeed in this world and in the lasting world to come.

Verses 6 - 11

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن قَرْنٍ مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
مَا لَمْ نُمَكِّن لَّكُمْ وَأَرْسَلْنَا السَّمَاءَ عَلَيْهِم مِّدْرَارًا وَجَعَلْنَا
الْأَنْهَارَ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهِمْ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُم بِذُنُوبِهِمْ وَأَنشَأْنَا مِن
بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ
فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنْ هَٰذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ
﴿٧﴾ وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ ۖ وَلَوْ أَنزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِيَ
الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنظَرُونَ ﴿٨﴾ وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَّجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا
وَلَلَبَسْنَا عَلَيْهِم مَّا يَلْبِسُونَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدِ اسْتُهْزِئَ بِرُسُلٍ مِّن
قَبْلِكَ فَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا مِنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ
﴿١٠﴾ قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ ثُمَّ انظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ
الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١١﴾

Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them, whom We had given in the land a position We did not give to you, and We left the heaven pouring over them and made rivers flow beneath them? Then We destroyed them because of their sins and raised up, after them, another generation. [6]

And if We had sent down to you something written on paper, and they had even touched it with their hands, still the disbelievers would have said, "This is nothing but sheer magic." [7]

And they say, "Why is it that an angel has not been sent down to him?" And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished, and thereafter they would have had no time. [8] **And if We had made him an angel, We would have obviously made him a man, and would have caused them the same confusion they are causing now.** [9]

Messengers have been mocked at before you. So, those who laughed at them were besieged by what they have been making a mockery of. [10]

Say, "Go about the earth, and see what was the fate of those who belied (the prophets)." [11]

Commentary

In previous verses, mention was made of grave consequences to be faced by those who avoid or oppose Divine commandments and prophetic teachings. In the present verses, the same deniers of the truth have been given an opportunity to learn and correct themselves by observing conditions around them as well as those prevailing in times before them. No doubt, events of the past are documents full of chastening lessons which, if seen to find wisdom, would prove to be more effective than a thousand sermons. So, still valid is the saying of the sage: The world is the best book and time, the best teacher. That is why wisdom-based historical anecdotes form a good part of the Holy Qur'ān. But, speaking generally, people have not given world history any serious role in conducting lives properly. They have, rather than benefiting from it, made it into an intellectual pastime which would either help to sleep or to while away spare time.

Perhaps, it is for this reason that the Holy Qur'ān has taken the essence of history as a server of warning and a dispenser of good counsel. But, this is unlike the customary historical fiction where the story or the event are an end in themselves. So, the Qur'ān has not taken up historical events as ongoing events in their own right. Instead of doing something like that, it has chosen to place part of the narrative as relevant to the given subject and setting of the message in the text. Then, there would be another occasion, another place, when it would describe another part of the story as relevant there. This may be indicative of the reality that a report or story is not an end by itself, in-

stead, the purpose is to identify the outcome of the report and the practical implication of the event, therefore, one should be concerned with what is necessary for the objective in sight, move ahead and survey his circumstances in that light - that is, learn that vital lesson from what has gone before and thereby correct oneself.

In the first verse, it was said about the people of Makkah, the direct addressees of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: أَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِن قَبْلِهِم مِّن قَرْنٍ 'Have they not seen how many generations We have destroyed prior to them?' Here, 'seen' means to ponder about, because these generations were not present before them at that time to see. It was after that, that the destruction of many generations ('*qarn*') was mentioned.

The word, قَرْن : *qarn*, is used for a group of people collectively present at a given time and period. It is also used to denote a long period of time which could be, depending on different interpretations, between ten to one hundred years. But, some events and narrations do support the position that this word is used for one hundred years as it appears in a *Ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had told Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Busr al-Mā'zīniyy that he will live for one *Qarn*. Also when the Holy Prophet ﷺ prayed for a certain child that may he live for a whole *qarn*, he did live for a full one hundred years. The majority of '*Ulamā'* take the famous *Ḥadīth*: خَيْرُ الْقُرُونِ قَرْنِي ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ يَلُونَهُمْ (still recited as part of the *Khuṭbah* of *Jumu'ah* all over the world) to be meaning exactly this, that is, every *qarn* is one hundred years.

About past peoples of the world, first it was said that the kind of power and well-being given to them was not given to people later than them, but when these very people took to the ways of belying prophets and disobeying Divine injunctions, all that majesty of power and wealth was rendered futile against the punishment of Allah which annihilated them totally. So, this was a lesson for the addressees of today, the people of Makkah who did not have the power of the legendary people of 'Ād and Thamūd, nor the affluence of the people of Syria and Yaman. For them, the need of the hour was to learn a lesson from what happened to the peoples of the past and turn towards an examination of their doings and think where they are going to end up by opposing the truth.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَاَنْشَاْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ (and raised up, after them, another generation). It means that the great power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* was not simply limited to seeing that nations of strength, authority and power lay destroyed in a flash, but it was right there on the ashes of their destruction that other peoples were made to rise and populate places, as if nothing had happened there and no one was missing from the scene. This spectacle of Divine power and wisdom is something observable in its own ways during every time and period when thousands die every day but there is no vacuum left anywhere. We never come to realize that people who belonged here are not here anymore.

Once, while on the plains of Arafāt with a million men and women spread around, came the thought that only a mere seventy or eighty years earlier, none among this whole assembly of people existed. Yet, on this same place of 'Arafāt, nearly that many other human beings were present, no trace of whom exists today. On this analogy, imagine about any assembly of human beings, any animated gathering of people, think about their past and future, and then figure out what you get - somebody telling you to wise up to the ultimate truth of things: فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ (Praised be Allah, the best of creators).

The second verse (7) was revealed in the background of a particular event when 'Abdullāh ibn Umaiyyah came up with a hostile demand before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم by saying: 'I cannot believe in you until such time that I see you climbing all the way to the heavens and bringing a book from there before our eyes, in which it should be written in my name that I should attest to your prophethood.' And, on top of saying all this, he went on to even declare that he would still not be impressed enough by his accomplishing all that for he does not seem to be likely to convert to Islam anyway.

Strange are the ways of fate, for this very gentleman embraced Islam later on, and embraced it with such fervor and class that he became a winning warrior in the cause of Islam and received his *Shahādah* (martyrdom) in the Battle of Ṭā'if.

Such were the uncalled-for and hostile demands made and mocking and insulting dialogues inflicted on the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, specially when he himself was more affectionate for his people, more

than their own parents could ever be to them. What effect these caustic bad manners would have made on his heart is something we cannot fathom. It can only be sensed by one who is consumed with the good of his people in the same manner as the blessed Prophet himself was.

Therefore, to comfort him, it was said that such demands from his antagonists were not being put forward for any useful purpose, nor did they want to follow it. They were a kind of people who would not stop at what they were demanding. Even if they were presented with far more clear proofs of their Prophet's veracity, they would still not believe. For example, if Allah were to send down, as they demanded, a written book from the heavens - and not only that they see it for themselves that there is no sleight of hand or sight or magic, they may even physically touch it with their hands to make sure that they were not day-dreaming and that it was a reality - still, after all that, they would say nothing but: إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ (This is nothing but sheer magic). This is because what they are saying comes from malice and hostility.

The third verse (8) was also revealed because of an event which concerns this very 'Abdullāh ibn Abī Umaiyyah who, accompanied by Nadr ibn al-Ḥārith and Nawfal ibn Khālid, came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. This time their demand was: 'We shall believe in you only when you go and bring a book from the heavens and let four angels come along with it to testify that the book was from none but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah.'

One answer Allah gave to them was that by making such demands, these heedless people were inviting their own destruction, because the Divine law is that, should a people ask their prophet to show a miracle of their choice, and as a result of their demand, such miracle is shown by the power and will of Allah, then, should they, even then, remain reluctant to believe and accept faith any longer, they are destroyed by a mass general punishment. These particular people of Makkah were really not making their demands as based on any good intentions, which may have at the least given some hope of their accepting the truth. Therefore, it was said: لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَّقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْظَرُوْنَ (And had We sent down an angel, the whole matter would have been finished). In other words, it means : 'If We do send the miracle they demand, that is, send an angel, then, these people who are not the kind who would

accept truth will still act contrary and hostile even after having seen the miracle, then, the Divine command to have them destroyed would stand activated. Since they would be given no respite after that happens, therefore, they should understand that the fact of not showing the miracle demanded by them spells out real good for them, without which they would be nowhere.

The second answer to this problem with them was given in the fourth verse (9) in a different manner where it was said that people asking such questions were certainly strange people who were demanding that angels should come down to them. This is so because there are only two ways angels can come down. Firstly, an angel may come as he is, in his form and state of being. If so, no human being can stand before his real awe - in fact, he is more likely to die at the never-imagined sight. The second form in which the angel could come down is that the angel comes in human shape and form, as Sayyidnā Jibra'īl al-Amīn has come to the Holy Prophet ﷺ several times in the shape of a human being. In this situation too, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is told, this questioner will have the same objection against this 'angel' as he has against you - because he would take him to be nothing but human.

After having answered all these hostile questions, solace has been given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the fifth verse (10) by saying that this attitude of mockery and injury directed against him by his people is not something particular to him. Other prophets and messengers before him had to face similar heart-breaking experiences, but they did not lose hope. Finally, what happened was that those who used to mock were overtaken by the punishment which they mocked at.

In short, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been assured that his mission is to convey the commandments of Allah. Once he feels he has done that, let his heart be at rest. Whether someone is affected by the message or not, that is not for him to worry about - for it is not a part of his duty as a Messenger of Allah. So, let this concern bring no sorrow to his heart.

Verses 12 - 14

قُلْ لِّمَنْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ قُلْ لِّلّٰهِ ؕ كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ
الرَّحْمَةَ ؕ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ لَا رَيْبَ فِيْهِ ؕ اَلَّذِيْنَ
خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَلَهٗ مَا سَكَنَ فِى الَّيْلِ
وَالنَّهَارِ ؕ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿١٣﴾ قُلْ اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا
فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ وَلَا يُطْعَمُ ؕ قُلْ اِنِّىْٓ اُمِرْتُ
اَنْ اَكُوْنَ اَوَّلَ مَنْ اَسْلَمَ وَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

Say, "To whom belongs all that there is in the heavens and the earth?" Say, "To Allah." He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful. He will surely gather you towards a day of doom in which there is no doubt. Those who have brought loss to themselves are not going to believe. [12]

And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day. And He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [13]

Say, "Would I take as guardian someone other than Allah, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and He feeds, and is not fed?" Say, "I have been asked to be the first to submit." And never be one of those who ascribe partners to Allah. [14]

Commentary

In the opening verse (12), قُلْ لِّمَنْ مَّا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ , the disbelievers have been asked as to who is the Master of the entire universe and all that it contains. Then, Allah Himself gives the answer through the blessed words of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم that Allah is the Master of all. The reason for answering the question, rather than waiting for the disbelievers to answer it, is that the answer given was an accepted fact with the disbelievers of Makkah as well, for they were, though involved with Shirk and idolatry, no deniers of the fact that Allah Almighty was the Master of the heavens and the earth and everything they contained.

The word, اِلٰى : *ilā* (towards) in the next sentence: لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ

(He will surely gather you towards a day of doom) has been used either in the sense of *tawaffā* meaning to take in full, bring to a finish, or gather, (as in the translation of the meaning given here), in which case, it would mean that Allah Ta'ālā will gather everyone, from the beginning to the end, on the day of *Qiyāmah* - or, it could mean 'to gather in the graves,' in which case, it would mean that human beings will be kept being gathered into their resting places unto the day of *Qiyamah* when they will be raised back to life. (Qurṭubī)

As for the sentence: كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ (He has prescribed for Himself to be merciful) appearing a little earlier in verse 12, a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta'ālā made His creation, He made a promise to Himself in writing which is with Him, written in which are the words: اِنَّ رَحْمَتِيْ تَغْلِبُ عَلٰى غَضَبِيْ that is, 'My mercy shall remain dominant over My wrath.' (Qurṭubī)

The sentence which appears at the end of the verse : اَلَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ (Those who have brought loss to themselves ...) indicates that the deprivation of the disbelievers from the universal mercy of Allah Almighty mentioned earlier was caused by their own deeds, for they did not take to the way which brings mercy - that is, the way of belief and faith. (Qurṭubī)

The word, '*sukūn*' appearing in verse 13: وَلَهٗ مَا سَكَنَ فِى الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ (And to Him belongs what finds rest in the night and the day) could either mean the state of being still or at rest, in which case, the verse would mean that Allah is the Master of everything present in the night and the day. Or, it is also possible that the sense could be that of a combined state of stillness and movement (which would amount to saying - what tarries and what moves), but what was mentioned here is the state of *sukūn* or rest only - because, movement which stands in contrast to it can be understood as being obvious enough.

Verses 15- 21

قُلْ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٥﴾ مَنْ
يُّصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهٗ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ ﴿١٦﴾ وَاِنْ

يَّمْسَسْكَ اللّٰهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهٗٓ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّمْسَسْكَ
بِخَيْرٍ فَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿١٧﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ
وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿١٨﴾ قُلْ اَيُّ شَيْءٍ اَكْبَرُ شَهَادَةً ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ
شَهِيْدٌۢ بَيْنِيْ وَبَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَاُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ
وَمَنْۢ بَلَغَ ؕ اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً اُخْرٰى ؕ قُلْ لَّآ
اَشْهَدُ ۚ قُلْ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ وَّاِنَّنِيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾
اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ ۘ اَلَّذِيْنَ
خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى
عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٢١﴾

Say, "If I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a momentous day." [15] **Whoever is spared from it (that day) is, indeed, blessed with His mercy. And that is success, open and clear.** [16]

And if Allah causes you some harm, no one is there to remove it except He Himself; and if He causes you some good, then He is powerful over everything. [17] **And He is Dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware.** [18]

Say, "What can be the greatest in bearing witness?" Say, "Allah. He is the witness between me and you. And this Qur'ān has been revealed to me so that I should thereby warn you, and whomsoever it may reach. Do you really bear witness that there are other gods along with Allah?" Say, "I bear no such witness." Say, "In fact, He is one God. And I have nothing to do with what you associate (with Him)." [19]

Those to whom We have given the Book recognize him (the Messenger) as they would recognize their sons. Those who have brought loss to themselves, they are not going to believe. [20] **And who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? Beware, the unjust shall not prosper.** [21]

Commentary

In the previous verses, the command given was to shun Shirk and believe in the perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* mentioned therein. In the first of the present verses (15), the punishment for the contravention of this command has been mentioned in a particularly endearing manner, that is, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been 'commanded' that he should tell the people that should he too (God forbid) come to contravene the command of His Lord, then, he too has the fear of the punishment of the day of *Qiyāmah*. It is obvious that the noble Messenger of Allah is (Divinely) protected from every sin - so, the likelihood of disobedience coming from him simply does not exist. But, by mentioning this hypothetical situation, the purpose is to convey the message to the community that the contravention of the Divine command is so serious a matter that even the greatest prophet cannot stand excused from it - if not him, who else?

After that, it was said: مَنْ يُّصْرَفْ عَنْهُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَقَدْ رَحِمَهُ (Whoever is spared from it that day is, indeed, blessed with His mercy). It means that the punishment of the day of Resurrection (*al-Maḥshar*) is extremely horrendous and harsh. Whoever finds this removed from him or her should know that it was great mercy from Allah. This has been further strengthened by saying: وَذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْمُبِيْنُ (And that is success, open and clear). The word, اَلْفَوْزُ : *'al-fawz'* (success) means being admitted in *Jannah* (Paradise). This tells us that deliverance from punishment and admittance into the Paradise are inseparable from each other.

All Gain and Loss Comes from Allah: A Cardinal Muslim Belief

In the third verse (17), a basic article of faith in Islam has been described - that it is Allah, in reality, who is the Master-Dispenser of all gain and loss. No one can 'really' bring the least benefit to anyone, nor cause the least harm. As for the outward manifestation of gain or loss, benefit or harm, seen coming from one person to the other, is no more than a matter of appearances. Seen in the full flash of reality, this does not hold out any more than a ready-to-vanish curtain. So succinctly the idea was put in a Persian couplet:

کار زلفِ تست مشک افشانی امّا عاشقاں
مصلحت راتہمتے برآ ہوئے چیں بستہ اند

Spraying Musk is the work of your tresses, but those who love you
Have found it expedient to ascribe the blame to the Chinese deer!

This belief too is one of the revolutionary beliefs of Islam, a belief which made Muslims shed the dependence on the created and rely on their Creator alone. It was this belief which put together a large group of unprecedented charmers of the soul on the map of the world, who were, despite their meager means and haunting hunger, weightier and worthier than a whole world - for they would not bow their heads before anyone.

The Holy Qur'ān has taken up this subject at many places with different approaches, out of which, quoted here is a verse from Sūrah Fāṭir:

مَا يَفْتَحِ اللّٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ رَّحْمَةٍ فَلَا مُمْسِكَ لَهَا وَمَا يُمْسِكْ فَلَا مُرْسِلَ لَهٗ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ

What Allah, out of His mercy, does make open to people, there is no one to withhold it; and what He does withhold, there is no one to release it after that - 35:2.

It appears in *Ṣaḥīḥ Aḥādīth* that the Holy Prophet ﷺ used to say this in his prayers very often:

اَللّٰهُمَّ لَا مَانِعَ لِمَا اَعْطَيْتَ وَ لَا مُعْطِيَ لِمَا مَنَعْتَ وَلَا يَنْفَعُ ذَا الْجَدِّ مِنْكَ الْجَدُّ

"O Allah, there is no withholder of what You have bestowed and there is no giver of what You have withheld and no status of a man of status can be of use to him against You.

Under his comments on this verse, Imām al-Baghawī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that there was an occasion when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم mounted a ride, he asked me to sit behind him. After having covered some distance, he turned towards me and said, 'You young man.' I said: 'Here I am, *Yā Rasūl* Allah. Can I do something?' He said: 'You remember Allah. Allah will remember you. If you will remember Allah, you will find Him before you under all circumstances. You recognize Allah when you are in peace and comfort, Allah will recognize you when you are in trouble. When you have to

ask, only ask Allah. When you need help, seek help only from Allah. Whatever is going to happen in this world has already been written by the writer of destiny. If all those created were to combine and try to bring a benefit to you in which Allah has kept no share for you, they would never be able to do that. And if they all come together and try to inflict a harm on you which is not in your lot, they would never become capable of doing that. If you are sure of being able to act patiently, then, do just that, by all means. If you do not have the strength and ability to do so, observe patience - because there is great good and *barakah* in remaining patient against what does not go well with your temperament. And understand it very clearly that the help of Allah is with patience, and comfort with hardship, and prosperity with adversity.' (This *Ḥadīth* also appears in Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad with sound chains of authority)

Alas, despite this clear declaration of the Qur'ān and the age long teachings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, this *Ummah* has started going off course in this critical matter when they have handed out what lies in the exclusive domain of Allah to His created beings. Today, there is a very large number of Muslims who would, rather than call upon Allah and pray to Him in their hour of distress, cry for help in all sorts of names, but do not seem to remember the name of Allah. As for praying to Allah through the spiritual mediation of prophets and men of Allah, that is a different matter, and that is permissible. Evidences of which are available within the teachings of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself. But, calling on or praying to a created being directly for the removal of one's need or solution of problem is an open rebellion against this Qur'ānic injunction. May Allah keep all Muslims on the straight path.

At the end of verse 18, it was said: وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ (And He is dominant over His slaves, and He is the All-Wise, the All-Aware). It means that the mastery of Allah Ta'ālā prevails over His servants in the absolute sense and that everyone remains under His power and control all the time. This is the reason why no human being, no matter how great, whether a prophet close to Allah, or the most powerful ruler of the world, none of them come out successful in everything they do, nor is every wish of theirs granted.

And then, He is Wise too, for everything He does is essential Wisdom. And then, He is All-Aware too, for He is the One who knows everything. Thus, by the word, *al-Qāhir* (the Dominant) pointed to is the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and, by the word, *al-Ḥakīm* (the All-Wise), His all-encompassing knowledge - and the two tell us that perfection in knowledge and power are the sole attributes of Almighty Allah and it is only Him that they belong to.

A particular event which is the cause of the revelation of this verse has been generally reported by commentators. It is said that once a deputation of the people of Makkah came to the Holy Prophet ﷺ. They said: 'You claim to be a Messenger of Allah. Who is your witness on this? We have yet to see a man who attests to its truth, although we have tried our best to confirm it from the Jews and Christians.'

Thereupon, the verse: قُلْ اَیُّ شَیْءٍ اَکْبَرُ شَهَادَةً which means: You tell them whose witness could be greater than that of Allah, within whose power lies the gain and loss of everyone in the world? Then, you tell them that Allah is the witness between me and you. The witness of Allah refers to those miracles and signs which Allah Ta'ālā made manifest to confirm the veracity of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Therefore, addressing the people of Makkah, it was said: اَئِنَّكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُوْنَ اَنَّ مَعَ اللّٰهِ اٰلِهَةً اُخْرٰی It means: Do you, even after the witness of Allah Ta'ālā Himself, stand to witness against Him by saying that there are other gods too along with Allah? If that is so, you are responsible for your fate. As for me, I bear no such witness. Then, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is asked to tell them: قُلْ اِنَّمَا هُوَ اِلٰهٌ وَّاحِدٌ that is, He is one God, the only one worthy of worship who has no partners, sharers or associates in His pristine Divinity.

And also said there was: وَاُوْحِیَ اِلَیَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ لِاُنْذِرَكُمْ بِهٖ وَمَنْۢ بَلَغَ that is, 'and the Qur'ān has been sent to me as the revealed Word of Allah so that I should warn you of His punishment and also warn all those people to whom this Qur'ān will keep reaching until the day of *Qiyāmah*.

This proves that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur'ān, the Last Book. It will continue to be recited and taught right through the day of *Qiyāmah*, and people will remain obliged to follow it.

Sayyidnā Sa'id ibn Jubayr رضی الله عنه said: To Whomever the Qur'ān has reached, he has become like one who has visited Muḥammad ﷺ. And it appears in another *Ḥadīth*: To whomever the Qur'ān has reached, I am his warner ('*nadhīr*').

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had asked his Companions emphatically : بَلِّغُوْا عَنِّيْ وَلَوْ اٰيَةً that is, convey my instructions and teachings to people, even if it be one '*Āyah*.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی الله عنه reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: May Allah keep that person hale and hearty who heard a saying of mine, committed it to his memory and then conveyed it to my *Ummah*. This is important because it generally happens that a person may not himself appreciate the sense of what is said but which would be understood much better by a person of later times to whom the first person has conveyed it.

In verse 20, there is a refutation of the saying of those who had said that they had checked with the Jews and the Christians and none of them were ready to attest to his truth as a Messenger of Allah. About that it was said: اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْرِفُوْنَهٗ كَمَا يَعْرِفُوْنَ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ That is, as for the Jews and Christians, they recognize Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā ﷺ as they would recognize their sons.

The reason is that there is, in the Torah and Injīl, a full description of the physical features of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, of his home city and then his post-emigration place of residence, and of his habits and morals and achievements - all this in such details that it leaves no room for doubt in the recognition of his identity. In fact, this is not limited to the mention of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Torah and the Injīl carry even the detailed description of his noble *Ṣaḥābah* as well. Therefore, there was no possibility that anyone who recited the Torah and the Injīl and believed in them would be unable to recognize the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم.

At this point, the simile given in the text is that of children - 'as they would recognize their sons.' Not said here is: as children recognize their parents. The reason is that the recognition of children by parents is most detailed and certain. Children remain before parents day and night under all conditions. From infancy to younger years,

they are raised in the hands and laps of parents. So, the extent to which parents can recognize their children, their children cannot recognize them.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām رضی اللہ عنہ belonged to the Jewish faith, then he became a Muslim. Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam رضی اللہ عنہ asked him: Allah Ta'ālā says in the Qur'ān that you recognize our Rasūl as you would recognize your sons. What is the reason for it? Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Salām said: Yes, we know the Holy Prophet ﷺ from his qualities and features revealed by Allah Almighty through the Torah. Therefore, this knowledge of ours is certain and absolute. This is contrary to our offspring about whom one could doubt whether or not they were their children.

Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Sa'nah who first belonged to the people of the Book had recognized the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم through the description of his qualities and features stated in the Torah and the Injīl. There was only one quality which could not be confirmed from earlier information. So, this he confirmed by testing. That quality was : 'His forbearance will dominate his anger.' Then, he went to see the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, made his test and found him a true bearer of this quality. He instantly became a Muslim.

In the last verse (21), it was said that these people of the Book who, despite knowing the true identity of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, do not accept Islam were simply ruining themselves at their own hands: الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (Those, who have brought loss on themselves, they are not going to believe).

Verses 22 -26

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا أَيْنَ شُرَكَاؤُكُمُ
الَّذِينَ كُنتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾ ثُمَّ لَمْ تَكُن فِتْنَتُهُمْ إِلَّا أَن قَالُوا
وَاللَّهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾ انظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوا عَلَىٰ
أَنفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُم مَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾ وَمِنْهُم مَّن
يَسْتَمِعُ إِلَيْكَ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ أَكِنَّةً أَن يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي

اٰذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا ۭ وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا كُلَّ اٰيَةٍ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهَا ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا
جَاۗءُوْكَ يُجَادِلُوْنَكَ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اِنْ هٰذَآ اِلَّآ اَسَاطِيْرُ
الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ وَيَنْـــَٔوْنَ عَنْهُ ۚ وَاِنْ يُّهْلِكُوْنَ اِلَّآ
اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And (forget not) the Day We shall gather them together, then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, "Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?" [22] **Then, their fallacy will lead them to nothing but that they will say, "By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah."** [23] **See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin.** [24]

And there are those among them who listen to you, but We have put coverings on their hearts, so that they do not understand, and heaviness in their ears. And if they were to see all the signs, they will still not believe in them. So much so that, when they come to quarrel with you, the disbelievers say, "It is nothing but tales of the ancients." [25]

And from it they prevent and from it they keep away, and they ruin none but themselves, and they do not realize. [26]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse (21) was that the unjust and the deniers of truth will not receive salvation. Details appear in the present verses. The first (22) and the second (23) verses talk about the great trial to be held on the day of Resurrection before the Lord of all. It was said: وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا (And [forget not] the Day We shall gather them together), that is, 'gather all disbelievers and their self-made objects of worship together.' After that, it is said: ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْٓا اَيْنَ شُرَكَاۗؤُكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ (then We shall say to those who associated partners with Allah, "Where are those you claimed to be partners of Allah?"), that is, 'ask them about the objects of worship they had taken to as partners of Allah, and resolvers of their problems, and why would they not come to help them in their hour of trial.'

The word, ثُمَّ :'*thumma*' (then, after that), used here denotes delay, which tells us that the trial of answering fateful questions will not start soon after having been gathered on the Day of Resurrection. Instead, they shall keep standing in that state of wonder and perplexity for a long period of time. It will be a passage of time in between when the reckoning will commence.

In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said: What would happen to you when Allah Ta'ālā will gather you on the plains of Resurrection as arrows are gathered in the quiver - and you shall be in that state for fifty thousand years. And it appears in another narration that everyone will tarry in the dark on that Day for one thousand years - not being able to even talk to each other. (This narration has been reported by Ḥākim in Al-Mustadrak, and by Al-Baihaqī)

The difference of fifty thousand and ten thousand in this narration also appears in two verses of the Holy Qur'ān as well. In Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij, it is said: كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ '[a Day] the measure whereof is [as] fifty thousand years - 70:4.' In Sūrah Al-Ḥajj, it is said: اِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَاَلْفِ سَنَةٍ :'A Day in the sight of thy Lord is like a thousand years of your reckoning - 22:47.' The reason for this difference is that this day will be long in terms of the severity of pain and the levels of pain will be different. Therefore, this day will seem to be that of fifty thousand years for some and that of one thousand years for others.

In short, on this venue of the great trial, a long period of time will pass for the trial to begin, so much so, that these people will wish that reckoning comes so that they can be relieved from their state of uncertainty, no matter what happens in the end. It is to indicate this length of stay that, as indicated earlier, the word, ثُمَّ (then) was prefixed to ثُمَّ نَقُوْلُ (then We shall say). Similarly, the answer given by the disbelievers mentioned in the second verse (23) also appears with the word, ثم (then), which indicates that they too will come up with their answer after having deliberated over it for a long period of time, in which they will say: وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ (By Allah, our Lord, we ascribed no partners to Allah). In this verse, their answer has been identified as: فِتْنَة : '*fitnah*' which could mean 'trial' or 'infatuation.' Both meanings can be taken here. In the first case, the answer given by the disbelievers becomes a trial by itself; while, in the second case, it would mean that these peo-

ple were infatuated with idols and other self-made objects of worship, even made sacrifices for them, but all that infatuation was gone on this day when they had no choice but to declare their total disassociation from them.

There is something very astonishing in their answer. That was a nerve-shattering time with the day being the Day of Retribution with the awesome manifestations of the power and authority of their Lord all there, yet they had the courage to lie before their very Lord, and that too, with such shamelessness that they are swearing by His great name and saying that they were no disbelievers!

Most commentators explain this answer given by the disbelievers as something not based on foresight or hindsight. In fact, it was caused by the heat of surrounding awe and the loss of personal nerves, a condition in which one utters what is not intended. But, by giving some thought to the general happenings and conditions of the Day of Resurrection, it could be said that Allah Ta'ālā had given them the freedom to say things as they used to say in their life of the mortal world so that everyone present on the Day of Resurrection could see their full profile and get to know that these people did not stop at disbelief and polytheism, but that they were also unmatched as liars, for they would not desist from lying at least on an occasion so horrifying. Another verse of the Qur'ān (Sūrah Al-Mujādalah): فَيَحْلِفُوْنَ لَهٗ كَمَا يَحْلِفُوْنَ لَكُمْ (then they will swear to Him as they swear to you - 58:18) gives a hint in this direction which means that very much in the manner they swear falsely before Muslims, they would not hesitate in swearing as falsely before the Lord of all the worlds Himself.

When these people have become sworn deniers of their *Shirk* and *Kufr* (attribution of partners to Allah and disbelief) on the day of Resurrection, that will be the time when Allah, in His absolute power, will have their mouths sealed with silence. His command will then go to the limbs of their bodies - 'now, you speak as witnesses to everything they did' - then, will come the proof that their own hands and feet and eyes and ears were all some kind of secret service agents who had been with them all along. They will tell, and tell everything they did. About that, it has been said in Sūrah Yā-Sīn: اَلْيَوْمَ نَخْتِمُ عَلٰٓى اَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَتُكَلِّمُنَآ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَتَشْهَدُ اَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ (That Day shall We set a seal on their mouths. But

their hands will speak to Us, and their feet bear witness, to all that they did - 36:65). After having witnessed this demonstration of unimaginable power, no one will, then, dare conceal anything or lie about it.

At another place in the Holy Qur'an, it is said: وَلَا يَكْتُمُونَ اللّٰهَ حَدِيثًا (And they shall not conceal anything from Allah - 4:42). Explaining its meaning, this is what Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas had said: That is, they would first lie as much as they could, even swear falsely, but once their own hands and feet shall testify against them, they will not have the courage to say anything wrong after that.

So, we see that a wrong-doer shall be given full freedom to put his statement on record in the court of the Judge of judges. If he choses to lie, as he did in his mortal life, his right to do that will not be snatched away from him - because Allah will Himself, in His absolute power, demolish the facade of his lie through the testimony of his own body parts.

This is why telling lies after death will not work. Think of an entrance examination or an admission test. After death, man's first test will be given by angels, *Munkar* and *Nakir*. Says the *Hadith*: When *Munkar* and *Nakir* will ask a *Kafir* (disbeliever): مَنْ رَّبُّكَ وَمَا دِيْنُكَ (Who is your Lord and what is your religion?), the *Kafir* will say: هَاهْ هَاهْ لَا أَدْرِىْ (Oh O, I do not know). In contrast a true Muslim will answer by saying: رَبِّىَ اللّٰهُ وَدِيْنِىَ الْإِسْلَامُ (Allah is my Lord and Islam is my religion). It appears no one will have the courage to lie in this test, otherwise a *Kafir* could have given the same answer as was given by a Muslim. The reason is that the test will be taken by angels who do not have the knowledge of the unseen, nor are they capable of making hands and feet give witness. If man had the choice of lying there, the angels would have simply acted in accordance with the answer given, but this would have disturbed the system. This is contrary to the test of the day of Resurrection where questions will be asked and answers given before Almighty Allah which means that no lie will work there even if resorted to.

Tafsir al-Bahr al-Muhit and Mazhari report from some elders that the people denying their Shirk on oaths will be those who did not openly declare a created being to be God or His deputy, but as for their deed, they had assigned all powers of Godhood to His created beings,

and from them sought answers to their needs, in their name they would make offerings, and from them they would ask sustenance, health, children and everything they wished to have. These people did not consider themselves as *Mushriks*. Therefore, on the day of Resurrection they would swear to it that they were not *Mushriks*. Ultimately, Allah Almighty will expose their disgrace.

Another question which arises in this verse is about what has been said in some verses of the Qur'ān - that Allah Almighty will not speak to the disbelievers and sinners - while, the present verse seems to be indicating clearly that such address will come to pass.

The answer is that such address or speech will not be in the form of honouring them or accepting their prayers. As for the negation of an address based on admonition, that is not intended in this verse. It could also be said that the address mentioned in this verse may be through the angels. As for the verse where Divine speech or address has been negated, it refers to an indirect address.

In verse 24, it was said: اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَذَبُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ (See how they lied about themselves - and lost to them was all that they used to coin). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who has been asked to see how these people have lied against their own selves, and whatever they used to forge and fabricate against Allah (their idols and so-called partners to Allah) is lost to them. The expression translated as 'lied about themselves' means that the curse of this lie is going to fall on their own selves while the word, افتراء translated as 'used to coin' may also mean that ascribing partners to Allah was a fabrication in the mortal world the reality of which was exposed on the day of Resurrection. And it is also possible that *'iftirā'* or fabrication could be referring to the false oath taken on the day of Resurrection following which the witness of the limbs of the body exposed their lie.

Some commentators say that *'iftirā'* or fabrication refers to interpretations they used to put on their false objects of worship in the mortal world, for example: مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ اِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُوْنَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ زُلْفٰى which means that 'We do not worship them taking them to be God but only do it so that they would intercede on our behalf with Allah and bring us closer to Him - 39:3.' This fabrication of theirs got exposed on the day of Resurrection

when no one interceded on their behalf in their hour of trial, nor any one did anything to bring about a reduction in their punishment.

This bring us to a question, for the verse seems to indicate that at the time of trial featuring these questions and answers, all false objects of worship will not be present there, but a verse of the Qur'ān says: أُحْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَمَا كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ (gather up those who have been unjust, and their partners, and what they used to worship - 37:22). This seems to indicate that the false objects of worship will also be present on the day of Resurrection.

The answer is that the sense of their being absent from the plains of Resurrection, as it emerges from this verse, is limited to their being unavailable as partners, sharers or intercessors. Thus, though they would be unable to help their clients in any way but, they would be present there. So, there remains no contradiction between the two verses. Then, it is also possible that all of them could be gathered together at one time and place, then be separated and the question is asked after the separation.

In these two verses, it should be particularly borne in mind that the choice of free speech given to disbelievers on the day of Resurrection which they utilized by denying on false oath that they had anything to do with Shirk, is not without its implications. Perhaps, it carries a hint that the habit of telling lies is an evil habit which is never easy to shake off. So much so that these people, who used to swear falsely before Muslims during their life in the mortal world, were unable to stop lying even on the fateful day of Resurrection which put them to disgrace before the entire creation of Allah. Therefore, lying has been strongly condemned in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth which give serious warning to those who tell lies. At many places in the Qur'ān liars have been cursed. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Stay away from lying because a lie is the accomplice of sins, and a lie and a sin will both go to *Jahannam*. (Ibn Ḥibban in his Ṣaḥīḥ)

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked what deed could take one to Hell. He said: A lie [the Musnad of Aḥmad]. And on the night of the *Mi'rāj* (the Ascent to Heaven), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم saw a man having the corners of his mouth being slit apart which then fall back into their place and become as they were, and again they are slit

apart ... something to keep happening to him throughout the day of *Qiyāmah*. He asked the angel, Jibra'īl al-Amīn: "Who is he?" Angel Jibra'īl said: "He is a liar."

And it appears in a narration from the Musnad of Aḥmad that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: One cannot become a complete Muslim unless he gives up lying altogether, to the extent that he would not lie even by way of joke or fun.

In addition to that, it appears in Al-Baihaqī and others, all on sound authority, that the character of a Muslim may have other bad traits - but, not breach of trust and lying. Yet another *Ḥadīth* says that lying decreases one's *Rizq* (sustenance).

The verse: وَهُمْ يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ (And from it they prevent - 26), according to early commentators Ḍaḥḥāk, Qatādah and Muḥammad ibn Ḥanafiyah, was revealed about the common disbelievers of Makkah who prevented people from listening to the Qur'ān and following it - and saw to it that they themselves stayed away from it. It has also been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās that this verse concerns the Holy Prophet's ﷺ respected uncle, Abū Ṭālib, as well as other uncles who stopped people from causing pain to him, even supported him, but would not believe in the Qur'ān nor follow it. If so, the pronoun in يَنْهَوْنَ عَنْهُ will revert to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and not to the Qur'ān. (Maẓharī with narration by Ibn Abī al-Ḥātim from Sa'īd ibn Abī Hilāl)

Verses 27 - 32

وَلَوْ تَرَىٰٓ إِذْ وُقِفُوا عَلَى النَّارِ فَقَالُوا يَٰلَيْتَنَا نُرَدُّ وَلَا نُكَذِّبَ
بِاٰيٰتِ رَبِّنَا وَنَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ بَلْ بَدَا لَهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا
يُخْفُوْنَ مِنْ قَبْلُ ؕ وَلَوْ رُدُّوْا لَعَادُوْا لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ
﴿٢٨﴾ وَقَالُوْٓا اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوْثِيْنَ
﴿٢٩﴾ وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذْ وُقِفُوْا عَلٰى رَبِّهِمْ ؕ قَالَ اَلَيْسَ هٰذَا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ
قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَرَبِّنَا ؕ قَالَ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ
﴿٣٠﴾ قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِلِقَآءِ اللّٰهِ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمُ

السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً قَالُوْا يٰحَسْرَتَنَا عَلٰى مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِيْهَا ۙ وَهُمْ
يَحْمِلُوْنَ اَوْزَارَهُمْ عَلٰى ظُهُوْرِهِمْ ۭ اَلَا سَاۗءَ مَا يَزِرُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾
وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ ۭ وَلَلدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِيْنَ
يَتَّقُوْنَ ۭ اَفَلَا تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

And if you were to see when they would be made to stand at the Fire and they will say, "Would that we were sent back, then we would not belie the signs of our Lord, and would join the believers." [27] **In fact, what they were concealing before would become clear to them. And if they were sent back, they would again go for what they were forbidden from, as they are nothing but liars.** [28]

And they say, "What does exist is nothing but this worldly life of ours, and we are not going to be raised again." [29]

And if you were to see when they will be made to stay before their Lord! He will say, "Is this not true?" They will say, "Of course, by our Lord, it is." He will say, "Then, taste the punishment, for you used to disbelieve." [30]

Losers indeed are those who deny that they will ever face Allah, yet when the Hour will come upon them suddenly, they will say, "Alas! we have been negligent about it." And they shall be carrying their burdens on their backs. Beware, evil is the burden they carry! [31]

And the worldly life is nothing but a game and play. And the last abode is surely good for those who fear Allah. Would you still not understand? [32]

Commentary

There are three basic principles of Islam: *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah), *Risālah* (Prophethood) and *'Ākhirah* (Belief in the Hereafter). All other articles of faith fall under these three. These are principles which tell human beings who they are and what is the purpose of their life. This understanding brings a revolution in their lives by showing them the straight path. Out of these, the Belief in the *'Ākhirah*, the be-

lief that there is a reckoning of deeds to come when good shall be rewarded and evil punished, has pragmatically the most revolutionary effects, as it channels every human deed into a particular direction. This is the reason why all subjects dealt with in the Qur'ān revolve around these three. In the verses appearing here, special emphasis has been laid on the reckoning of the *'Ākhirah*, its rewards and punishments, and the true nature of the mortal world.

In the first verse, portrayed is the condition of wrong-doers and deniers of truth who, when made to stand by the edges of the Hell, and to observe the horrifying punishment far beyond their imagination, would wish that they were sent back into the world where now they would never falsify the signs and commands of their Lord, would believe in them and would be the true believers.

In the second verse (28), Almighty Allah, who is All-Knowing and All-Aware, exposes the reality of their wish, which would be nothing but the compulsion of circumstances, by making it clear that these people have always been addicted to lying and that they were liars even in their present wish under trial. The root of the problem with them was that they did not relish the realities brought before them by the prophets of Allah. They knew that the prophets were true, yet they raised dust to keep such realities unmanifested either because of their chronic obstinacy or worldly greed. But, in the Hereafter, everything came out in the open. They saw the power of Allah with their own eyes. They realized that the prophets had told the truth. Even, the life after death, something they had denied all along was before them, really and physically. Then, they became direct witnesses to reward and punishment and Hell. After that, they were left with no argument to continue their attitude of denial and opposition. So, when they wished to be returned to the mortal world, that was mere absence of choice.

Then, their All-Knowing, All-Aware Master said that this was what they were saying for now, but if they were to be sent back into the mortal world once again, they would simply forget all about their promises and resolutions and will revert to doing what they have been doing before, and would start getting involved once again with the unlawful from which they were stopped. Therefore, what they were say-

ing now was also a lie and a ploy for deception.

That their present statement has been called a lie could also be based on their ultimate deed, that is, their promising not to lie if returned to the world was not true, for this would never happen because they would still do nothing but keep lying when they go there. This lie could also mean that whatever they were saying at that time was not prompted by true intention. They were doing so simply to buy time and avoid punishment while in the heart of their hearts, they still have no intention of doing it.

As for the statement in the third verse (29): وَقَالُوٓا اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا (And they say, "There is nothing real but this worldly life of ours"), it reverts back to the word, عَادُوْا ('ādū : would again go for) in verse 28. Thus, it means that should they be returned to the world, then, once they reach there, they will still say that they do not accept any life other than the life of this world. Life here is the life and they were not going to be raised again.

A question arises here: When they have seen their return to life on the day of *Qiyāmah* - and reckoning and accounting and reward and punishment - how can it be possible that they would deny it once they have been sent back into the world?

The answer is that denial does not make it necessary that, in reality, they remain uncertain about these events and facts. Instead, it would be very much like our contemporary disbelievers and wrongdoers who, despite their knowledge of Islamic realities, keep sticking to their denial and falsification simply because of their hostility, that these people, once they are returned to the world, and despite having personal certainty of the realities of the day of *Qiyāmah*, of rising to life back again, and of what would happen in the Hereafter, they would still resort to their old habit of belying and falsification simply because of their wickedness or hostility. This is what the Qur'ān has said about some disbelievers within this present life:

وَجَحَدُوْا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا اَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَّعُلُوًّا

> They are striving hard to deny Our signs - while in themselves being certain of their truth - (only) unjustly, and out of pride - 27:14.

This is also similar to what was said about the Jews that they recognized the Last Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as they would recognize their sons, yet they remained all bent on opposing him.

To sum up, it can be said that the Creator knows, in His eternal knowledge, that the claim of these people that once they have been sent back to the world, they would become ideal Muslims, is a lie and a deception. If they were, as they wished, to be released into the world put together after its destruction, then, once again, they would do exactly the same things they used to do in their earlier lives.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: At the time of reckoning, Allah Ta'ālā will ask Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to stand near the Scale of Justice and will ask him that he should look at the deeds of his progeny and allow anyone whose good deeds outweigh his sins to go to Paradise. And then He would say: The one I shall admit to the punishment of Hell will be the one about whom I know that he, if sent to the world again, would do the same thing he had been doing earlier.

About the sentence: وَهُمْ يَحْمِلُوْنَ اَوْزَارَهُمْ (And they shall be carrying their burdens) in verse 31, it appears in *Ḥadīth* narrations that, on the day of *Qiyamah*, the deeds of good people will become their ride while the evil deeds of evil people will be placed like a burden on their heads.

Noteworthy here is that disbelievers and sinners will do everything possible to save their skins on the fateful day of Resurrection. They will be nervous and confused. Sometimes they would hide behind false swearing. At others, they would wish to be returned to the world of their earlier experience. But, none of them will say: Now, we have believed and now we shall be doing nothing but what is good - because they would have seen reality and seen it very clearly - that the phase of *Ākhirah*, the Hereafter, is not the Venue of Deeds (*Dār al-'Amal*), and that the soundness of *'Īmān* (faith) depends on its being *'bil-ghayb,'* that is, without having the need to see what is Unseen. Confirming what has been seen is simply acting in line with what has been personally seen. It is not what the attestation to the truth of Allah and His Messenger is. So, let us be very clear that working for the pleasure of Allah Ta'ālā, earning its fruits in the form of the promised state of everlasting bliss, hoping to be blessed with Paradise in the Here-

after, and having a good life of peace and tranquility right here are things which can be achieved only (repeat, only) through the life of the present world, neither before, nor after - for it is not possible to achieve these in the universe of spirits (*arwāḥ*) before it, nor is it possible to achieve it in the domain of the Hereafter, after the world of our experience is no more there.

The Present Life is a Great Blessing: Invest Wisely, and Prosper

Now we can see that the life of this world is a great blessing, and certainly an asset of unmatched value. (To borrow the terminology of modern investors, 'with such chips in one's hands, who would not go for such a deal of deals?' - Tr.). So, this life is an opportunity which must be taken seriously. That is why suicide is forbidden as *Harām* in Islam, and equally prohibited is praying for death, even the making of a wish to die. This is so because it shows ingratitude for a great blessing of Allah Ta'ālā.

Also clarified here is the basis on which worldly life has been characterized as game and fun in the last verse (32) here, as well as in several other verses of the Qur'ān, or in many *Aḥādīth* which condemn worldly life. There, by worldly life what is censured is the time of life which is spent being heedless to the thought and concern of Allah Ta'ālā. Otherwise, no wealth of the world is equal in worth to the time one spends in remembering Allah and doing what He has commanded us to do. This is also confirmed by a *Ḥadīth* which says:

اَلدُّنْيَا مَلْعُوْنٌ وَمَلْعُوْنٌ مَّا فِيْهَا اِلاَّ ذِكْرُ اللّٰهِ اَوْعَالِمٌ اَوْمُتَعَلِّمٌ

Dunyā is cursed and cursed is what is in it, except the Dhikr of Allah, or '*Ālim* (a knowledgeable person) or a student.

If seen closely, a teacher (of religion) and a student (of religion) are included under the *Dhikr* (Remembrance) of Allah because '*Ilm*' means the knowledge which becomes the cause of the pleasure of Allah. So, the learning and teaching of such an '*Ilm* are both included under *Dhirkrullāh*. In fact, according to the clarification of Imām al-Jazrī, everything done in this world which is done in conformity with obedience to Allah, that is, in accordance with the injunctions of the Sharī'ah, is all included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. This tells us that every-

thing necessary that must be done in this life of the world, all permissible ways of earning one's livelihood, and the fulfillment of other needs which are not beyond the limits set by the Shari'ah, shall all be considered as being included under the *Dhikr* of Allah. In fact, the fulfillment of the rights of family, relatives and friends, neighbours and guests and others has been identified as an act of *Ṣadaqah* (charity) and *'Ibādah* (worship of Allah).

To recapitulate, it can be said that, there is nothing in this world more worthy of Allah's favour than *'Iṭā'ah* (obedience to Him) and *Dhikr* (remembrance of Him). Then, the dearest and the worthiest possession man has is his time of life in this world. And we know that this time is limited. And no one knows exactly how long his or her life is, seventy years or seventy hours, or no more than the span of a breath. On the other hand, we know that the pleasure of Allah which is the only guarantee of a good life, here and there, can be acquired only within the limits of our life in this world. Now, every human being, whom Allah has blessed with sense and vision, can decide it for himself how he is going to spend these limited moments and hours of his life, and in what. No doubt, common sense would demand that this precious time should mostly be spent in what would meet the pleasure of Allah. As for chores which are necessary to hold this life together, they should be taken to as needed.

In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

اَلْكَيِّسُ مَنْ دَانَ نَفْسَهٗ وَرَضِيَ بِالْكَفَافِ وَعَمِلَ لِمَا بَعْدَ الْمَوْتِ

Wise is he who controls his self, and stays pleased with minimal resources, and devotes his deeds for what is after death.

Verses 33 - 41

قَدْ نَعْلَمُ اِنَّهٗ لَيَحْزُنُكَ الَّذِیْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ فَاِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُوْنَكَ وَلٰكِنَّ
الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلَقَدْ كُذِّبَتْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْ
قَبْلِكَ فَصَبَرُوْا عَلٰى مَا كُذِّبُوْا وَاُوْذُوْا حَتّٰۤى اَتٰهُمْ نَصْرُنَا ۚ وَلَا
مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَكَ مِنْ نَّبَاِی الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾
وَاِنْ كَانَ كَبُرَ عَلَيْكَ اِعْرَاضُهُمْ فَاِنِ اسْتَطَعْتَ اَنْ تَبْتَغِیَ نَفَقًا

فِى الْاَرْضِ اَوْ سُلَّمًا فِى السَّمَآءِ فَتَاْتِيَهُمْ بِاٰيَةٍ ؕ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ
لَجَمَعَهُمْ عَلَى الْهُدٰى فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْجٰهِلِيْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اِنَّمَا
يَسْتَجِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ يَسْمَعُوْنَ ؕ وَالْمَوْتٰى يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ
يُرْجَعُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَقَالُوْا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ ؕ قُلْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ
قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اٰيَةً وَّلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَمَا
مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا طٰٓئِرٍ يَّطِيْرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ اِلَّاۤ اُمَمٌ
اَمْثَالُكُمْ ؕ مَا فَرَّطْنَا فِى الْكِتٰبِ مِنْ شَىْءٍ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ
يُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا صُمٌّ وَّبُكْمٌ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ ؕ
مَنْ يَّشَاِ اللّٰهُ يُضْلِلْهُ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّشَاْ يَجْعَلْهُ عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ
﴿٣٩﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَتَتْكُمُ السَّاعَةُ
اَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ تَدْعُوْنَ ۚ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ بَلْ اِيَّاهُ تَدْعُوْنَ
فَيَكْشِفُ مَا تَدْعُوْنَ اِلَيْهِ اِنْ شَآءَ وَتَنْسَوْنَ مَا تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾

We do know the fact that what they say does grieve you, because it is not you that they are belying, but the transgressors are actually denying the signs of Allah. [33]

And, indeed, messengers have been belied before you, but they stood patient against their being belied, and they were tortured until Our help came to them. And no one can change the words of Allah, and of course, there have come to you some accounts of the messengers. [34]

And if their aversion is too hard on you, then seek, if you can, a tunnel into the earth or a ladder onto the sky in order to bring them a sign. And had Allah willed, He would have brought them all to the right path. So, never be one of the ignorant. [35]

Only those respond who listen. As for the dead, Allah shall raise them after which they shall be returned to-

wards Him. [36]

And they say, "Why is it that no sign has been sent down to him from his Lord?" Say, "Allah is surely powerful enough to send down a sign, but most of them do not know." [37]

There is no creature moving on the earth, nor a bird flying on its two wings, but they all are communities like you. We have not missed anything in the Book. Then, to their Lord they shall be gathered together.[38]

And those who have belied Our signs are deaf and dumb, in layers of darkness. Whom Allah wills, He lets him go astray, and whom Allah wills, He brings him on the straight path. [39]

Say, "Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes to you or the Hour befalls you, would you call someone other than Allah, if you are truthful?" [40] **Rather, Him alone you will call and He, if He wills, shall remove what you call Him for and you will forget those you associate with Him.** [41]

Commentary

About the statement: فَإِنَّهُمْ لَا يُكَذِّبُونَكَ (it is not you they are belying, rather, it is the signs of Allah they are denying) in the first verse (33), there is a related event, reported in Tafsīr Maẓharī on the authority of a narration by As-Suddiy, according to which, once Akhnas ibn Shuraiq and Abū Jahl, two chiefs of the Quraysh tribe met together. Akhnas asked Abū Jahl: O Abul-Ḥikam, (In Arabia, Abū Jahl was called Abul-Ḥikam - 'man of wisdom' - but because of his hostility to Islam, he became known as Abū-Jahl - 'man of ignorance'), you and me are alone here. There is no third person listening to us. Tell me about Muḥammad ibn 'Abdullāh صلى الله عليه وسلم. Tell me what you really think about him. Is he telling the truth or is he not?

Swearing by Allah, Abū Jahl said: No doubt, Muḥammad ﷺ is true. He has never lied all his life. But, the problem is that the thought, that only a single branch of the tribe of Quraysh, the Banū Quṣayy, is going to become the repository of all sorts of virtues and perfections while the rest of the tribe remains totally deprived, is something that we cannot take. It is too much. They have the flag in

their hands. They have the important duty of providing water for the Hajj pilgrims in their hands. They are the custodians of the Ka'bah; its keys are in their hands. Now, if we are to accept that the station of prophethood also belongs to them, what the rest of the Quraysh will be left with?

According to another narration reported from Nājiyah ibn Ka'b, once Abū Jahl himself told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: We do not suspect you of lying nor do we belie you, but we do belie the Book or Religion which you have come up with. (Mazharī)

Based on these narrations of *Ḥadīth*, the verse can be taken in its real sense, that is, 'these disbelievers do not belie you, rather, they belie the signs of Allah.' And this verse could also be taken in the sense that these disbelievers, though belie you obviously but, in reality, the outcome of belying you is itself the belying of Allah and His signs - as it appears in *Ḥadīth*, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whoever causes pain to me is liable to be judged as causing pain to Allah.

The sixth verse (38): وَمَا مِن دَآبَّةٍ (there is no creature moving ...) tells us that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, animals will also be given life along with human beings. Following a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, it has been reported by Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Baihaqī that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, all animals, beasts and birds will also be given life once again. Such will be the measure of Divine justice that a horned animal which had hit the hornless one shall be subjected to retaliation, as would be the case with others too. And when all injustices have been vindicated, all of them would be commanded to become dust - and then, dust they shall become. This would be the time when the disbeliever will say: يٰلَيْتَنِى كُنتُ تُرٰبًا [78:40] that is, 'would that I too were to become dust, and thus saved from the punishment of Hell!'

In another narration, again from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah, Imām Al-Baghawī reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, rights of all holders of rights shall be vindicated, to the limit that a hornless goat shall be vindicated against the horned one.

Maximum Regard for the Rights of Allah's Creation

Everyone knows that animals have not been obligated to observe

the percepts of any Sharī'ah or code of laws. Only human beings and Jinns have been so obligated. And it is obvious that the jurisdiction of reward and punishment does not apply to the non-obligated. Therefore, '*Ulamā'* have said that the retaliation against the behaviour of animals on the day of Resurrection will not be because of their being obligated, but it will be because of the Lord's utmost regard for equity and justice - based on which the cruelty of one living creature against the other living creature will be recompensed, with no reward or punishment to follow for the rest of their behaviour. This tells us that the matter of mutual rights, and their infringements, pertaining to the creation of Allah is so serious that even non-obligated animals have not been left as exempted from it. But, it is regrettable that there are even many religiously-observing people who would act negligently about it.

Verses 42 - 45

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَآ اِلٰٓى اُمَمٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ بِالْبَاْسَآءِ
وَالضَّرَّآءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ فَلَوْلَآ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ
بَاْسُنَا تَضَرَّعُوْا وَلٰكِنْ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ وَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ
مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ فَلَمَّا نَسُوْا مَا ذُكِّرُوْا بِهٖ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ
اَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا فَرِحُوْا بِمَآ اُوْتُوْٓا اَخَذْنٰهُمْ بَغْتَةً فَاِذَا
هُمْ مُّبْلِسُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَقُطِعَ دَابِرُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا ؕ وَالْحَمْدُ
لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾

And We did send messengers to communities before you and put them to hardships and sufferings, so that they may supplicate in humility. [42] **Why then, did they not supplicate in humility when Our punishment came upon them? Instead, their hearts were hardened and the Satan adorned for them what they were doing.** [43]

Thereafter, when they forgot the advice they were given, We opened for them doors of everything until when they became proud of what they were given, We seized them suddenly and they were left in despair. [44] **Thus,**

the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man, and praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds. [45]

Commentary

The verses cited above, if seen in the context of verses appearing immediately previous to them, will show the particular mode in which *Shirk* and *Kufr* have been refuted and *Tauḥīd*, affirmed. First, the disbelievers of Makkah have been asked: If you are hit by a calamity now, for example, the punishment of Allah descends on you right here in this world or comes death or the very Day of Doom breaks loose, then think and answer who it will be you would call for help to keep this calamity away from you or who it would be you will hope to deliver you from this terrible punishment? Do you think these self-sculpted idols in stone or any others from among the creation of Allah you have given His status would come out to help you in your hour of trial? And then, would you still address your cry of distress to them, or would you rather appeal to none but Allah, the One, the All-Powerful?

There can be no better answer from any sensible human being which was given by Allah Ta'ālā Himself on behalf of them - that, at a time of such mass calamity, even the greatest *Mushrik* will forget all about his idols and self-appointed objects of worship and would call none but Allah. If so, the outcome is obvious. These idols of yours, and the objects of worship whom you have given the status of Allah Ta'ālā and whom alone you regard as your problem solvers and granters of wishes, in fact, did not come to help you in your distress, nor could you muster the courage to call them up to help you out. Now then, when would it be that your devotion to them as objects of worship and their role of problems solvers assigned to them by you will start working for you?

What has been said here is a gist of immediately previous verses. Stated here as a matter of supposition is that punishment could befall them within the life of this world as an outcome of their disbelief and disobedience. And, again as a matter of supposition, if the punishment does not visit them in the present life, then, the coming of the *Qiyāmah* is certain after all when account will be taken from all human beings of their deeds and put in effect shall be the law of reward and punishment against these.

'*Qiyāmah*' here could mean the commonly acknowledged *Qiyāmah* or the Day of Doom. It is also possible that, by the particular use of the word, 'As-Sā'ah' (The Hour) -[41], the sense could be that of 'The Smaller Doom' (*al-Qiyāmatuṣ-Ṣughrā*) which stands activated for every human being immediately after his or her death - as the saying is: مَنْ مَّاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهُ (For one who dies, his or her '*Qiyāmah*' (Doom) stands established right then) because a preliminary sampling of the ultimate reckoning of the *Qiyāmah* will come before the deceased in his or her '*Qabr*' (burial place) and in the state of *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-*Qiyāmah* state) and the sampling of the ultimate reward and punishment due 'there' would start showing up right from 'here.' (Not too difficult to visualize for those familiar with 'testers' and 'samples' provided on perfume counters in alcoves of major mega stores which are meant to tell the visitor: 'WYSIWYG!' That is, 'what you see is what you get.' - Tr.)

But, despite warnings given in these verses to disobedient people against their attitude of complacency - lest there comes upon them some sudden Divine punishment as has come on past communities, or death, or ultimately the very reckoning after *Qiyāmah* about which there is no doubt - such people have a mind of their own. They tend to take the whole world on the analogy of their limited experience in the already limited time of their life which makes them compulsive excuse seekers in such matters. Present before them the warnings and intimations given by blessed prophets and they will bypass them as ambiguous thinking, specially at times, and which reappear in all ages, when there are people around who, in spite of their open disobedience to Allah and His Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, keep prospering in wealth, property, influence, recognition and power, almost everything. So, on the one hand, here is what they witness with their own eyes, while, on the other hand, is the word of the blessed messenger of Allah who tells them that punishments do come upon the disobedient as it is the customary practice of the One they disobey. Now, as they look at the two sides of the argument simultaneously, then, their own excuse seeking disposition and, of course, the Satan hoodwinks them into believing that the word of the prophet is a deception or delusion.

Now, for an answer, we can turn to the present verses where Almighty Allah has pointed out to the law which applies to what hap-

pened to past communities. It was said: وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَآ إِلَىٰٓ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَأَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُونَ It means that Allah did send, before the Holy Prophet ﷺ, His prophets to other communities which were tested in two ways. Firstly, they were tested with hardships and sufferings to see if these would become the cause of their turning to Allah. But, when they failed in this test and, rather than turn to Allah and abandon disobedience, became all the more engrossed in it, then, they were subjected to a different kind of test. The doors of worldly comforts were opened to them. They had everything they could wish for in the material world so that through these blessings they could recognize their Benefactor and remember Him. But they, rather than be grateful to Him, were so lost in the labyrinth of luxury that they forgot all about the messages and teachings of Allah and His Messenger. Thus, having traded their souls for the glitter of fleeting comforts, they failed in both tests, and their case before Allah became conclusively established against them. So, they were seized by the punishment of Allah suddenly which destroyed them to the last man. This punishment had come upon earlier communities too, down from the heavens and up from beneath the earth, and such mass punishments have come in other ways too which had reduced whole peoples and nations to ashes. The people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام were deluged in the great flood which did not spare even mountain peaks. The people of 'Ād were hit by an eight-day long wind storm which left not one survivor. The people of Thamūd were destroyed through a terrifying sound. The entire habitation of the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام was overturned, the remnants of which still exist in the west of Jordan in the form of a low lying water level which is not conducive to the survival of any sea life. Therefore, it is called The Dead Sea, and also the Sea of Lūṭ.

In short, these were some forms in which Divine punishment befell past communities as a result of their disobedience destroying whole nations and peoples in one stroke. However, it has also happened that such people died away naturally leaving no one behind to remember them.

Also clarified in these verses is that Almighty Allah does not send down His punishment upon any people all of a sudden. Instead, punishments come at the level of admonitions the purpose of which is to make it possible for people to shed their heedlessness and take to the

correct path. We also know from here that the hardship or distress which is sent to people on the earth as punishment for them, though outwardly looks like punishment but, in reality, it is not. Instead of that, it serves the purpose of a wake-up call designed to shake people out of their heedlessness. As such, it is nothing but mercy. Says another verse of the Qur'ān: وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُم مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ , that is, We will make them taste a lesser punishment, leaving the greatest punishment aside, so that they may return - 32:21.

Removed from these very verses is the doubt about this world which is no place for rewards (*Dārul-Jazā'*), but a place where one must do what one should (*Dārul-'Amal*). What then is the sense of being punished in this world where good and bad seem to be weighed on the same scale and where, in fact, the evil ones fare better than the good? The answer is clear. The real reward and punishment will come on that one day of *Qiyāmah*, which is known as the very Day of Judgement (*Yowmud-Dīn*) or the Day of Retribution (*Yowm al-Jazā'*).. But, some hardships are sent in this world as a sample of punishment (*'Adhāb*) and some comforts as a sample of reward (*Thawāb*) which are a token of mercy from Allah. Some spiritual masters have even said that all comforts of the world are indicators of the comforts of Paradise so that one learns to long for them. As for all those hardships and sorrows that afflict man in this world, they too are indicators of the punishment of the Hereafter so that man prepares to stay safe against them. Unless there is a sample or model in sight, no one can be pursuaded towards anything, nor can anyone be detracted from any impending danger or evil.

So, the comforts and discomforts of this mortal life are not rewards and punishments as such. They are, rather, samples or tokens of rewards and punishments. We may say that this whole world is a show room of *Ākhirah* (the Hereafter) where the trader displays the demonstration pieces of his merchandise in front of his store or shop so that they could attract the buyer. Thus, we can see that worldly prosperity or poverty, happiness or sorrow are not reward and punishment in the real sense. Actually, they are a method of bringing the creation of Allah alienated from its Creator back to His fold.

At the end of verse 42 itself, this element of wisdom finds expres-

sion through the words: لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَضَرَّعُوْنَ (so that they may supplicate in humility). It means that the hardship inflicted on them during their life in the present world was really not aimed at punishing them. Since everyone turns to Allah naturally when in distress, the purpose was to make people turn to Allah through a little hardship. This tells us that the hardship or pain which visits a person or group as punishment is, in a sense, the working of Divine mercy.

As for the statement: فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ اَبْوَابَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ (We opened for them doors of everything) appearing in the third verse (44), it warns human beings at large that no one should be deceived by seeing the affluence of persons or groups and hasten to the conclusion that these were the people on the correct path and that their life was a model of success. One should never forget that among them there could be some of those disobedient ones who have been picked out to be seized with sudden and grave punishment.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When you see blessings and wealth raining upon someone - though he is deep in sin and disobedience - then, know that he is being lured into destruction (*Istidrāj*), that is, his affluence is an indicator of his being seized in punishment. (Narrated by Aḥmad from 'Āqabah ibn 'Amir as in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Following a narration from Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Al-Ṣāmit, leading commentator Ibn Jarīr has reported that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said:

> When Allah Ta'ālā wills to have a nation survive and grow, He creates in them two qualities: (1) moderation in everything they do, and (2) modesty and chastity, that is, abstinence from indulging in what is not right. And when Allah Ta'ālā wills to destroy a nation, He opens for them the doors of breach of faith (*Khiyānah*), that is, they appear to be successful in the world despite their breaches of faith and wrong doings.

In the last verse (45), it was said that, when the mass punishment of Allah Ta'ālā came, the people who did wrong were uprooted to the last man. Said immediately after was: وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (And praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds) where the hint given is: Whenever the wrongdoers and the unjust are visited by some punishment or calamity, that is a blessing for the whole world for which people should be grateful

Verses 46 - 49

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ سَمْعَكُمْ وَاَبْصَارَكُمْ وَخَتَمَ عَلٰى
قُلُوْبِكُمْ مَّنْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ يَاْتِيْكُمْ بِهٖ ۗ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ
الْاٰيٰتِ ثُمَّ هُمْ يَصْدِفُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ قُلْ اَرَءَيْتَكُمْ اِنْ اَتٰىكُمْ عَذَابُ
اللّٰهِ بَغْتَةً اَوْ جَهْرَةً هَلْ يُهْلَكُ اِلَّا الْقَوْمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَمَا
نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ اِلَّا مُبَشِّرِيْنَ وَمُنْذِرِيْنَ ۚ فَمَنْ اٰمَنَ وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا
خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا
يَمَسُّهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَفْسُقُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Say, "Tell me, if Allah takes away your hearing and your sights and sets a seal on your hearts, which god other than Allah can bring it back to you?" See how We bring forth a variety of Verses, still they turn away. [46]

Say, "Tell me if the punishment of Allah comes upon you abruptly or manifestly, shall any people be destroyed except the unjust?" [47]

And We do not send the messengers but as bearers of good tidings and warners. So, whoever believes and comes to correct himself, then, there is no fear for them nor shall they grieve.[48] **And those who have belied Our signs, punishment shall visit them, since they used to commit sins.** [49]

Verses 50 - 51

قُلْ لَّآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِيْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ
اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ ۗ قُلْ هَلْ
يَسْتَوِى الْاَعْمٰى وَالْبَصِيْرُ ۗ اَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَاَنْذِرْ بِهِ
الَّذِيْنَ يَخَافُوْنَ اَنْ يُّحْشَرُوْٓا اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِهٖ
وَلِيٌّ وَّلَا شَفِيْعٌ لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾

Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures

of Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I follow but that which is revealed to me." Say, "Is it that a blind person and a sighted one are equal? Do you, then, not reflect?" [50]

And warn, with it, those who have the fear of being gathered before their Lord, with no one, other than Him, to support or to intercede. May be they abstain. [51]

Commentary

The Demand of Miracles from the Holy Prophet ﷺ

Many miracles and signs of Allah had already appeared before the disbelievers (*Kuffār*) of Makkah. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم graced this world as an orphan. Unschooled and untutored, he lived his whole life as a total *Ummiyy* (unlettered). He was born in a land with no scholar or institution of learning, near or far. For a full forty years of his blessed age, he lived before the eyes of the entire people of Makkah in this state of chaste tutorlessness. Then, after forty long years, it was all of a sudden that there gushed forth from his blessed speech such mind-boggling stream of words the eloquence of which challenged and silenced the masters and authorities of Arab diction for ever. Besides being wisdom and meaning at their sublimest, its far reaching insight covered pragmatic human needs too right unto the day of *Qiyāmah*. Along with these, he gifted to the world a practical system for the nurture and flowering of the perfect universal man. No human ingenuity or effort can ever achieve something like this. And the system he brought was no exercise in pure theory for others to build upon, for he himself demonstrated it practically and succeeded in proving that it worked. Thus, the human multitude of his time which had taken to eating, drinking, sleeping and waking as the purpose of their lives likes bulls, goats, horses and donkeys, to them he gave their essential lesson in humanity. He changed their orientation. He made them look up to the high purpose for which they were created. Thus, every period in the blessed life of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the great events which took place during it, were all a miracle in their place, and very certainly, a sign of Allah. In such a background, there was no room left for anyone just and reasonable to demand any sign or

miracle.

But, the disbelievers from among the Quraysh, despite this, demanded that miracles of a different kind be shown to them according to their own wishes. Of the miracles demanded by them, there were some Allah Almighty showed to them clearly. They had demanded that they would like to see the moon parted in two. The well-known miracle of *Shaqqul-Qamar* (the parting of the moon) was witnessed, not only by the Quraysh, but by a great number of people living in the world of that time.

But, they kept sticking to their disbelief, obstinacy and hostility despite the manifestation of such a miracle at their own request and ignored the sign of Allah by saying: إِنْ هٰذَآ إِلَّا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ (this is nothing but a continuous magic), that is, it was a magic which has been there for ever. They saw, they understood, yet they kept on asking for ever-new miracles as mentioned earlier (verse 37): لَوْ لَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ اٰيَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ قُلْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَادِرٌ عَلٰٓى أَنْ يُّنَزِّلَ اٰيَةً وَّلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ that is, they ask if Muḥammad ﷺ is really the Messenger of Allah, why is it that no miracle has been shown through him? In answer, the Qur'ān asks the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell them that Allah does have everything within his power. He has Himself manifested many miracles and signs without their asking for them. Similarly, He is quite capable of manifesting miracles they demanded. But, they have to know that there is a customary practice of Allah in this matter. When a people are shown the miracle they have demanded, and then, when they do not come to believe in it, they are seized by a sudden punishment. Therefore, it was in the very interest of those people that the miracles demanded by them should not be manifested. But, there are many people who still do not understand the wisdom of this action and keep insisting that they be shown miracles of their choosing.

In the present verses, the questions asked and demands made by these people have been dealt with in a particular manner.

The disbelievers of Makkah had presented three demands before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on different occasions: (1) If you are really a Messenger of Allah, bring to us the treasures of the whole world through the power of miracle; (2) If your are really a Messenger of Allah, tell us about everything good and bad going to happen to us

in the future, so that we can arrange to acquire what is good and abstain from what is bad beforehand; and (3) Explain to us for we cannot understand how can someone who is a human being like us, is from us, was born from a mother and father like us, and does things like eating, drinking, and walking around in streets and bazaars as we do, all of a sudden become a Messenger of Allah. Had this been an angel, whose creation and attributes would have been more distinguished than ours, we would have accepted him as a Messenger of Allah, and our leader.

In answer to these questions, it was said:

قُلْ لَّآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ عِنْدِىْ خَزَآئِنُ اللّٰهِ وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّىْ مَلَكٌ
اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَىَّ .

> Say, "I do not say to you that with me are the treasures Allah, nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen, nor do I say to you that I am angel. But, I follow that which is revealed to me."

In other words, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is saying that he can only be asked to prove what he claims, that is, he is a Messenger of Allah. He conveys the guidance given by Him to human beings, and follows it personally and asks others as well to do so. There is no dearth of proofs in this matter for they are many.

So, to prove his prophethood, it is not necessary that the messenger of Allah should become the owner of all the treasures of Allah, nor is it necessary that he should possess the knowledge of everything, big or small, which lies in the domain of the Unseen (*al-ghayb*), nor is it necessary that he be an angel having attributes other than human. Instead of all that, the mission and office of a messenger of Allah is simply to follow the Wahy (revelation) sent from Allah Ta'ālā - which includes his own acting in accordance with it as well as inviting others to follow it.

These are precise rules of Guidance. They not only clarify the reality of the office of a Messenger of Allah (*Rasūl*) but also help erase the false notions about a Messenger entertained by the disbelieving people. And as implied here indirectly, Muslims too have been instructed that they should not take their Messenger to be God as the Christians do, nor assign proprietary rights in Godhood to him. The realization of

their greatness, and love for them, demands that Muslims should not slide into attitudes of excess or deficiency like the Jews and Christians - for the Jews did not hesitate from even killing their prophets while the Christians turned their messenger into a God.

Regarding the meaning of the word: خزائن (treasures) appearing in the statement made in the first sentence, that is, 'I do not say to you that with me are the treasures of Allah,' scholars of *Tafsīr* have named many things. But, the Holy Qur'ān itself, wherever it has mentioned the treasures of Allah, has said: وَاِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ اِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهٗ (there is not a thing the treasures of which are not with Us - 15:20). This tells us that the sense of 'the treasures of Allah' encompasses everything in this world and cannot be definitely applied to some particular things. As for commentators who have named particular things, they are doing so as an example. Therefore, there is no contradiction here. Finally, let us bear in mind: When this verse clearly declares that the 'treasures of Allah' are not even in the hands of the one foremost among prophets and messengers, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, how can we assume that a *Buzurg* (pious elder) or *Walī* (man of Allah) of the Muslim Community could do what they wished and grant anything to anyone as they chose? This is sheer ignorance.

In the third sentence of the answer given in verse 50, was: وَلَآ اَقُوْلُ لَكُمْ اِنِّيْ مَلَكٌ which means 'I do not say to you that I am an angel' - because they refused to accept him as a Messenger based on his human identity. [The pattern of this sentence is the same as the first] However, the pattern of the sentence has been changed in the sentence which appears in the middle of these two where the text does not say something like - I do not say to you that I know the Unseen - and what was said actually was: وَلَآ اَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ (nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen).

In his Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, Abū al-Ḥayyān has pointed out to a subtle justification for this change in diction. According to him, being or not being the possessor of all Divine treasures; and similarly, the likelihood of a person being or not being an angel are things which are related to observation. The addressees of the answer knew it all, they knew that the entire treasures of Allah are not in his hands nor is he an angel. Their demands were simply based on malice and hostility. In reply to them, it would have been enough to say that 'I have never

claimed that I am the owner of the treasures of Allah', or that 'I am an angel.'

But, the problem of '*Ilm al-Ghayb*' (the knowledge of the Unseen) was not something of that nature - because they already had this kind of belief about their astrologers and soothsayers: That they know the Unseen. So, having this kind of belief about the Messenger of Allah was not unlikely - specially when they had also heard many news of the Unseen through the blessed speech of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and had witnessed that they happened as told. Therefore, at this place in the text, a simple negation of the claim and saying was not considered enough. In fact, what was negated was the actual act. He said, "وَلَآ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ" (nor do I have the knowledge of the Unseen). By saying so, also removed was their misunderstanding that a certain knowledge of things Unseen given to an angel or a Rasūl (Messenger) or a *Walī* (man of Allah) through Waḥy (revelation) or *Ilhām* (inspiration) from Allah Ta'ālā, cannot be called '*Ilm al-Ghayb* (the knowledge of the Unseen), or its knower, the '*Ālim al-Ghayb* (one who has the knowledge of the Unseen), in accordance with the terminology of the Qur'ān.

Right from here also comes the clarification that no Muslim can doubt the fact that Allah Ta'ālā had blessed the Holy Prophet ﷺ with the knowledge of many things of the Unseen, so many as would surpass the combined knowledge of angels and human beings from the first to the last. This is the belief of the entire Muslim *Ummah*. Of course, right along with it, according to countless statements of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, it is also the belief of all early and later Imāms that the All-Encompassing Knowledge (*al-'Ilm al-Muḥīṭ*) of the whole universe is the exclusive attribute of none but Allah Ta'ālā. Neither can an angel or messenger be equal to Him in being the *Khāliq* (Creator), the *Rāziq* (Provider) and *Al-Qādir Al-Muṭlaq* (Absolutely Powerful); similarly, nor can anyone be equal to Him in His All-Encompassing Knowledge. Therefore, no angel or prophet, despite having the knowledge of a great many things of the Unseen, can be called '*Ālim al-Ghayb* (the Knower of the Unseen).

But, about the many excellences of our master, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم, we can simply say:

بعداز خدا بزرگ توئی قصّہ مختصر

Ba'd az Khudā buzurg tuee qiṣṣah mukhtaṣar!

After God, you are the reverred one that is all!

His excellence in knowledge is ahead of angels, prophets and messengers, but is not equal to the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. Claiming such equality is the path of excess taken in Christianity.

At the end of the verse (50), it was said that the blind and the sighted cannot be equal. It means that they should get rid of their selfish concerns, leave obstinacy and hostility, and see reality as it is so that they may no longer be counted among the blind. For them, the need was to start seeing, to wise up, for they could have their missing sights back with them with a little thought and concern (for what is right and true).

In the next and the last verse (51), the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been instructed that, after all these clear statements, if they still remain obstinate, he should draw a line, stop all debate, and get busy with his real mission, that is, the duty of *Tabligh*, the real mission of prophethood. And onwards from there, let him turn the focus of his call to faith and warning against its rejection to people who believe in being produced before Allah Ta'ālā to give an account of their deeds on the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* - for example, the Muslims - or those who are, at least, no deniers, even if that is in a certain degree of being probable, for they would at least have the apprehension that, perhaps, they may have to be answerable for their deeds.

To sum up, there are three types of people who believe or do not believe in *Qiyāmah*: (1) Those who believe in it as being certain; (2) Those who doubt or waver; and (3) Those who reject it totally. Though, the blessed prophets have been commanded to convey their call and warning to all these three classes of people, as evident from many statements of the Holy Qur'ān. But, as the likelihood that the call will be more effective among the first two classes of people is more pronounced, instruction has been given in this verse to pay special attention to them: وَأَنذِرْ بِهِ الَّذِينَ يَخَافُونَ أَن يُحْشَرُوا إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ (And warn, with it, those who have the fear of being gathered before their Lord).

Verses 52 - 55

وَلَا تَطْرُدِ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ
وَجْهَهٗ ؕ مَا عَلَيْكَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّمَا مِنْ حِسَابِكَ
عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ فَتَطْرُدَهُمْ فَتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ
فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِّيَقُوْلُوْٓا اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ مَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنْۢ
بَيْنِنَا ؕ اَلَيْسَ اللّٰهُ بِاَعْلَمَ بِالشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾ وَاِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِيْنَ
يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ
الرَّحْمَةَ ۙ اَنَّهٗ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوْٓءًۢا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ
وَاَصْلَحَ فَاَنَّهٗ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ
وَلِتَسْتَبِيْنَ سَبِيْلُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾

And do not expel those who call their Lord morning and evening seeking His pleasure. You are not responsible for anything in their account and they are not responsible for anything in your account that you expel them out and thus become one of the unjust. [52]

And in this way We have tested some of them through some others, that they say, "Are these the ones, from among us all, whom Allah has favoured?" Is it not that Allah knows the grateful best? [53]

And when those who believe in Our verses come to you, say, "Peace on you. Your Lord has prescribed for Himself the mercy that whoever does something bad in ignorance, then repents after that and corrects himself, then He is Most Forgiving, Very Merciful. [54] **And that is how We make the verses elaborate, so that the way of the guilty may become exposed.** [55]

Commentary

In Islam there is No Distinction between Rich and Poor, High or Low

As for people who failed to feel human despite being human, even touched the outer limit of rating human beings as one of the smartest

animals of the world, who did not hesitate in harnessing other 'animals' in their service, what would they know about the purpose of creation other than taking the fulfillment of their immediate physical compulsions and needs, and acting in accordance with animal instincts as the purpose of their lives - very much like an animal would do. When this be the only purpose of life, then, it is also obvious that the criterion of recognizing good and bad, small or big, high or low, noble or mean can hardly be any other than whoever has more and better to eat and drink, wear and use up, and things and resources to live around with and hold on to, shall be successful, honourable and noble - and whoever has less of these shall be low life and doomed!

The truth of the matter is that, given this view of life, talking about good morals and good deeds as a criterion of judging the nobility of human beings remains out of the question. In that case, only that deed will be good and that morality will be virtuous through which these animal objectives could be fully realized.

Therefore, the first and the last lesson given by the blessed prophets and the religions they brought with them was that there is a life after this life, which will be eternal and uninterrupted. Its peace will be perfect and eternal, and so will be its pain, perfect and eternal. The life of the present world is not its own purpose. Instead of that, the real purpose of this transitory life is to get together everything which is going to come out handy in the other life - (delightfully summarized with a punch by an Urdu poet who said):

رہا مرنے کی تیاری میں مصروف

مرا کام اور اس دنیا میں تھا کیا

Remained busy getting ready to die -

What else was that I had to do in this world?

This is the line of distinction between human beings and animals - that animals have no concern for the next life, contrary to human beings whose greatest concern, at least in the sight of reasonable and far-sighted people, is to correct, nurse and build the prospects of the next life. Given this belief and point of view, the standard of nobility and menialness, honour and disgrace will obviously not be eating and drinking lavishly, living plentifully or qualitatively, or making and

holding wealth and property greedily - instead, the standard will be good morals and righteous deeds on which depends the real honour of the *Ākhirah* (Hereafter).

Whenever people in this world have shifted away from the teachings of the prophets عليهم السلام and from belief in the *Ākhirah*, the natural outcome was there for everyone to see. Money and things became the cold criterion of character and status. Those successful in this race were taken as high and classy, and whoever was left behind, or remained an under-achiever, was taken to be poor, honourless, mean and low.

Therefore, in all ages (including ours with the loudest claims to democracy and justice), people caught in the maze of worldly life have been practicing class distinction of rich and poor and high and low openly or secretly under a thousand guises whereby they would assign all virtues to the rich and influential and condemn the poor as low-life. This is what the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام did. They criticized the believing poor following this standard, when they said that they would not sit with such lowly people. They said that if he wished them to hear his message, he should first turn those poor wretches out of his company. They even said: قَالُوٓا اَنُؤۡمِنُ لَكَ وَاتَّبَعَكَ الۡاَرۡذَلُوۡنَ [26:111]. It means: 'How can it be that we are to believe in you while those following you are lowly people?' Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام answered their heart-rending remark in his own prophetic diction when he said: وَمَا عِلۡمِىۡ بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ اِنۡ حِسَابُهُمۡ اِلَّا عَلٰى رَبِّىۡ لَوۡ تَشۡعُرُوۡنَ [26:112]. It means: 'I do not know about what they do (which could help him decide whether they were high or low) so (the reality of everyone's deeds and) their accounting is the responsibility of none but my Lord (who is aware of the secrets of the hearts), if you understand.'

By saying so, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام brought these ignorant and arrogant people oblivious of the reality of human nobility and ignobility to see the truth of the matter - as they were the ones who used these terms without knowing what they really meant and just went ahead stamping the rich as noble and the poor as wretched, while money is no criterion of virtues and vices. The criterion is deeds and morals. At this occasion, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام could have said that those people were nobler and more respectable than them as far as the standard of

deeds and morals was concerned. But, his prophetic method of preaching and correcting did not permit him to say something like that lest his addressees are provoked adversely. Therefore, he thought it to be sufficient to say that lowliness depended on deeds and since he did not know about their deeds fully, he could not decide as to who was noble and who was not.

The same thing has been happening in every age, after the age of Sayyidnā Nūḥ, when poor people of successive times, no matter how noble and respectable in terms of their morals and deeds they may have been, were still down-graded as lowly by materialistic and arrogant people. Yet, these were the people who, guided by their far-sightedness and good morals, were the first ones to say yes to the call of prophets in one after the other age. In fact, for later scholars of religions and communities this became the proof of the veracity of a prophet that his early followers are the poor ones of the community. This was the reason why, when the letter of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم reached the Byzantine ruler, Heracles (Hiraql) inviting him to embrace Islam, he wished to investigate into the veracity of his prophethood. For this purpose, he asked from people who knew the Prophet of Islam some questions. One of these questions was: Whether most of his followers were from among the rich, or the poor? When he was told that they were poor people, he said: These are usually the first followers of messengers and prophets.

The same question rose again during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Its answer appears in the present verses with particular instructions.

Reports Ibn Kathīr from Imām Ibn Jarīr: Some chiefs of disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh - ʻUtbah, Shaybah, Ibn Rabiʻah, Muṭʻim ibn ʻAdiyy, Ḥārith ibn Nawfal and others - came to the Holy Prophet's uncle, Abū Ṭālib and said to him: One of the problems, which stops us from listening to and accepting what Your nephew Muḥammad ﷺ tells us, is that people who surround him all the time are either our slaves who were set free by us, or they are people who were living at our mercy only. Now, with such lowly people around him, we cannot attend his sittings. You tell him, if he would ask these people to leave when it is time for us to come in, we could listen to him and think about it.

When his uncle, Abū Ṭālib reported this to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, Sayyidnā 'Umar offered his advice by saying: What is wrong with it? Try this too for a few days. These people love us and they are not formal. When these chiefs are to come, they would move away from the sitting.

Thereupon, this verse was revealed in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been emphatically prohibited to do something like that. It was after the revelation of the verse that Sayyidnā 'Umar had to apologize by admitting that his advice was wrong.

And these poor people about whom this conversation took place were, at that time, no less a people than Sayyidnā Bilāl al-Ḥabashī, Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb ar-Rūmī, Sayyidnā 'Ammār ibn Yāsir, Sayyidnā Sālim Mawlā Abī Ḥudhayfah, Ṣabīḥ Mawlā Usayd, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd, Sayyidnā Miqdād ibn 'Amr, Sayyidnā Mas'ūd Ibn al-Qārī, Sayyidnā Dhush-Shimālyn, and other noble *Ṣaḥābah* (may Allah be pleased with all of them) the testimonial of whose nobility and honour came from the heavens. And at another place in the Holy Qur'ān, the same subject was stressed upon in these words:

وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدٰوةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ وَلَا تَعْدُ
عَيْنٰكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيْدُ زِيْنَةَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۚ وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ اَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهٗ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا
وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ وَكَانَ اَمْرُهٗ فُرُطًا ○

> And hold your self with those who call on their Lord morning and evening, seeking His pleasure only. And do not cast your eyes (for others) beyond them, seeking the embellishment of the present life. And do not obey the one whose heart We have made neglectful of Our remembrance, and who follows his own desires, and whose case is that of excess - 18:28.

In the present verse, the quality of these poor people has been identified as: They call on their Lord morning and evening. Here, morning and evening refer to all times of the day and night according to usage. As for calling, it means *'Ibādah* or worship. Also placed here is a restriction along with this *'Ibādah*, at whichever time of the day and night it may be, that is: يُرِيْدُوْنَ وَجْهَهٗ :'seeking Him only.' This tells us that *'Ibādah* (worship of Allah) without *Ikhlāṣ* (absolute sincerity before Him) is not trustworthy.

As for the saying: 'You are not responsible for what is in their account, and they are not responsible for anything in your account,' according to the interpretation of Ibn 'Aṭiyyah and Al-Zamakhsharī and others, here the pronouns in: حِسَابِهِمْ (*Ḥisābihim* : their account) and عليهم (*'Alaihim* : they are not responsible) refers to these chiefs of disbelievers, those who insisted on removing poor Muslims from the gathering at the sitting. So, Allah Ta'ālā told the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم not to bother with them whether, or not, they enter the fold of faith - because he was not responsible for anything in their account, just as they were not responsible for anything in his account. If he were responsible for that, that is, he would have been questioned as to why these people did not become Muslims, then, in that situation, he could have removed the poor Muslims from his sitting just for the sake of the chiefs of the disbelievers. And now, when this is not so, removing them from the sitting was rank injustice. And if he were to do something like that, he would have become one of the unjust.

In the second verse (53), it was said that this is how Allah had tested some of them through some others, so that these chiefs of the disbelievers should be able to see the great subduing power of Almighty Allah when poor Muslims, whom they took to be lowly, reached stations unimaginable and won signal honour and recognition both in this world and in the *Ākhirah*, just because they chose to follow the Messenger of Allah. Then, let them go about saying: Were these poor people the only ones to deserve honours and rewards from Allah and to have been so blessed at the expense of us, the noble ones?

According to *Kashshāf* and other classic commentories, this saying of theirs is an outcome of their trial taken through poor and weak Muslims. They failed in this test. Rather than ponder over this great demonstration of Allah's absolute power and conclude therefrom that nobility does not depend on wealth or power, instead, it does on morals and deeds - they started blaming Allah for giving them the honour while they were the ones deserving of it. In answer, Allah Ta'ālā once again pointed out to the reality behind it by saying: أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِالشَّٰكِرِينَ (Is it not that Allah knows the grateful best?) It means that Allah knows best as to who has the taste for truth and aptitude for gratitude. In other words, in the real sense, a person of nobility and honour is he

who recognizes the right of his Benefactor and is grateful to Him, and it is he who is deserving of all reward and honour - and definitely not the one who, day in and day out, despite being soaked with the blessings of his Provider and Benefactor, goes on disobeying Him.

Some Injunctions and Instructions

Given below are some injunctions and instructions which emerge from these verses:

1. No one has the right to look down upon anyone in tattered clothes or broken down condition. At times, there are people carrying those outward looks who happen to be very honourable and accepted in the sight of Allah. In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: 'Many a broken-down, dust-stained people are such as are held dear by Allah. If they were to swear by Allah about something that it would be like that, Allah Ta'ālā does honour their swearing by Him (and lets it be like that).

2. Taking material affluence as the criterion of nobility and lowliness is an insult to humanity. It really depends on good morals and deeds.

3. For a reformer and preacher of any nation, though a universal call which addresses everyone, ayes or nays, followers or dissenters, is necessary, yet, foremost is the right of those who own his teachings and follow it. Putting them as secondary, or ignoring them for the sake of others is not permissible. For example, in the case of Muslims, the education and reform of unaware Muslims should not be put off in favour of carrying the call to non-Muslims.

4. The rewards and blessings of Allah keep increasing in relation to the measure of gratitude. A person who wishes an increase in Divine rewards, must make gratitude, expressed through word and deed, his way of life, a constant of personality.

About verse 54: وَإِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ (And when to you come those who believe ...), there are two interpretations given by leading authorities in *Tafsīr*:

1. Most of them have declared it to be related to previous verses and event. In support, they refer to the narration about the event when the chiefs of Quraysh demanded through Abū Ṭālib that his

nephew should first remove the poor people around him, with whom they could not sit, then they would come and listen to him, and think about it. Thereupon, it was Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه who advised that it did not matter much, for Muslims were sincere friends and if requested they would move out of the sitting so that the chiefs of Quraysh could listen to the Word of Allah and become Muslims.

But, in the previous verses, came the command against this advice that this should never be done. Doing this would be cruel and unjust. The revelation of this verse made Sayyidnā 'Umar رضى الله عنه realize the gravity of his error. He feared he had become a sinner by advising against what was the will of Allah. He came to tender his apology for it.

Thereupon, the present verses were revealed to comfort him. In gist, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked here to assure them that there will be no retribution for their past mistakes. In fact, not simply that there will be no retribution for the mistake, but that they will also be blessed in many ways by the most merciful Allah. He has also been asked to tell them about His Law that if a Muslim does something evil in ignorance, then gets alerted, repents and corrects his ways for the future, Allah Almighty will forgive him his past sins - and will also not deprive him of His blessings in this world and in the world to come. According to this explanation, these verses were revealed as related to this particular event described in previous verses.

2. Some commentators have taken these verses to be carrying an independent set of rules for guidance. These relate to people who have committed a sin, then felt ashamed of what they did, and repented, and corrected their ways.

A little deliberation will show that there is no contradiction between the two sayings - because it is universally agreed that an injunction of the Holy Qur'ān which has been revealed in the background of a particular event, subject to the condition of its words and subject being general, shall not remain restricted to that event, instead of which, it shall have the status of a general injunction. Therefore, even it were to be granted that the said verses did come to be revealed about the event mentioned, still then, this injunction shall have the status of a general rule of conduct which will cover every sinner who

gets alarmed even after having committed the sin, then feels ashamed, repents, corrects and turns watchful for the future.

Now let us turn to a fuller explanation of these verses. It is said in the first verse (54): وَإِذَا جَآءَكَ الَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاٰيٰتِنَا فَقُلْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ It means: When those people come to him who believe in His *Āyāt* (the word, '*Āyāt*', at this place, could mean the *Āyāt* or Verses of the Qur'ān, and the *Āyāt* or general signs of the perfect power of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* as well), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been instructed to address them by saying: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ (Peace be upon you). Here, '*Salāmun 'Alaikum*' could have two meanings. It could either mean: Convey to them the *Salām* or greetings of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* - which is the highest honour they could receive. Given this interpretation, that becomes the best antidote for the heart-break of poor Muslims, about whom the chiefs of the Quraysh had said that they should be removed from the gathering before they come. Or it could also mean: You give them the good news of their being safe and protected - that is, if they have fallen short or even made a mistake in what they have done, that will stand forgiven, and that they shall stay protected against all sorts of calamities.

In the next sentence of the verse: كَتَبَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ , the promise of additional favour and reward has been made by saying : You tell these Muslims that Allah has taken it upon Himself that mercy shall be shown to them. Therefore, let them not be frightened or nervous. First of all, by using the word, *Rabb*, the assertion in the verse has been provided with a proof - that Allah is your Nurturer, Nourisher, Sustainer. It is obvious no nurturer would let what is being nurtured go to waste. Then, the mercy which was promised by that *Rabb* has been further clarified through a weighty, yet endearing, statement that 'their *Rabb* has prescribed this mercy on Himself'. It is obvious when even an average good person would not go back on his promise, how could this be ever imagined when referred to the Lord of the Worlds Himself, specially so when this promise has been preserved as a written document.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه, it has been reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, and in the Musnad of Aḥmad, that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta'ālā created the whole creation and determined the destiny of every-

one, then, in a Book with Him on the *'Arsh*, He wrote: إِنَّ رَحْمَتِيْ غَلَبَتْ غَضَبِيْ (My Mercy is dominant over My Wrath).

And Sayyidnā Salmān رضى الله عنه says: We have seen written in the Torah, when Allah created the heavens and the earth and the entire creation in them, He divided His mercy in a hundred parts. One part from this He distributed all over the creation - and wherever any effect of this mercy is found among human beings, animals and other elements of creation, that owes itself to this same part. The mutual love and concern found among parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, among relatives, neighbours and friends, are all the outcome of this share from the mercy of Allah. The rest of the ninety nine parts of mercy have been kept by Allah Ta'ālā for Himself. There are other narrations in which this has been described as a *Ḥadīth* from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This goes to show the quality and extent of Allah's mercy for His creation.

It goes without saying that no *'Ibādah* (worship) or *'Iṭā'ah* (obedience) can be good enough so as to be considered as presentable before Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* - neither by an angel nor by a human being. We should not see our *'Ibādah* and *Iṭā'ah* and good deeds in isolation. If we were to look at them as related to the highest of the high, we would humbly realize that what we have been able to do was not any better than what is simply bad. Still one has to be thankful for being able to do what was possible specially when no human being is free of real evils and sins - unless protected by Allah. Under this situation, justice would have demanded that no one remains safe from a general punishment. But, what is actually happening is that every human being is being showered with the blessings of Allah all the time. This, then, is the direct outcome of that mercy which the great Lord-Nourisher of the universe has put it down in writing as His responsibility.

Every Sin is Forgiven by *Taubah* [Repentance]

This perfect mercy of Allah appears mentioned in the form of a rule in the third sentence of verse 54: أَنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ مِنْكُمْ سُوٓءًۢا بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهٖ وَأَصْلَحَ فَأَنَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ It means: One of you who happens to have done something bad by having acted ignorantly, then repents after that and corrects his conduct, then Allah Almighty is most forgiving, He will forgive him his

sins; and He is very merciful, so forgiveness alone will not be considered enough, for he will be blessed with rewards also.

From the word, " جَهَالَةٍ " (*Jahālah*; literally: ignorance, used in the sense of acting ignorantly) one may think that this promise of forgiveness is valid only when a sin is committed in a state of ignorance, not knowing what is being done - and the commitment of a sin knowingly would be considered excluded from the purview of this injunction. But, this is not true - because *Jahālah* (ignorance) here means acting ignorantly which refers to the act of ignorance, that is, one ends up doing something as would have been done by one who is ignorant and unaware of the outcome of his or her act. It is not necessary that the doer of the act be ignorant in reality. This is confirmed by the use of the word *Jahālah* itself - as the word, *Jahalah* has been used here instead of using the word, *Jahl*, most likely to point out to this refinement in meaning. The reason is that *Jahl* (also meaning ignorance) is an antonym of *'Ilm* (Knowledge) while *Jahālah* stands in contrast to forbearance and dignity. In other words, the word, *Jahālah* is employed, in usage, to ignorance which is demonstrated practically, in deed. A little thought will reveal that a sin, whenever it is committed by someone, comes about to be because of this practical ignorance. Therefore, some pious elders have said that a person who acts against any command given by Allah and His Messenger is *Jāhil* (ignorant). It refers to this very practical ignorance. For this, it is not necessary to be uninformed and lacking in knowledge - because countless definitive statements of the Holy Qur'ān and Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth* (*Naṣṣ*) prove that every sin can be forgiven by making *Taubah* (repentance), whether committed by heedlessness or ignorance, or knowingly and deliberately through self-wickedness or a blinded following of (the drum-beats of) one's own desire.

At this point, it is also worth noticing that the promise of mercy and forgiveness made to sinners in this verse is conditioned with two things: (a) *Taubah* (repentance), and (b) the *Iṣlāḥ* of *'Amal* (the correction of misdeed). *Taubah* means being ashamed of the sin. Says the *Ḥadīth*: إِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ النَّدَمُ (*Taubah* or repentance is another name of *Nadāmah*, that is, being ashamed of or having remorse).

As for the second condition, that is, the correction of deed, it means

that one should see to it that what happened before will not be repeated in the future. So, this process of trying to better one's doings includes the making of a firm determination not to go near that sin ever again by fully auditing and checking one's behaviour at all times, and also included here is that all rights belonging to someone which have been violated or compromised because of that sin, should be compensated to the best of one's capability. They may be the Rights of Allah (*Ḥuqūqullāh*) or the Rights of the Servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-ʻIbād*). Examples of the Rights of Allah are: Falling short in the duties and obligations like *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, *Zakāh* and *Ḥajj*. And the examples of the Rights of the Servants of Allah are: Usurping someone's property unlawfully, to attack someone's honour, and to cause pain to someone by using bad language or causing such pain in some other manner.

Therefore, for *Taubah* (repentance) to be total and complete, the way it is necessary to first feel ashamed of the past sin, then seek forgiveness from Allah Taʻālā, then resolve to keep one's conduct correct and straight in the future and never go near that sin again - similarly, it is also necessary that the prayers (*Ṣalāh*) and fasts (*Ṣawm*) which were missed due to heedlessness should be replaced by doing *Qaḍā'* for them. Then, any *Zakāh* which has not been paid earlier should be paid now. If there is a shortcoming in taking care of what was obligatory in *Qurbānī* (Sacrifice) or *Ṣadaqatul-Fiṭr* (post-Ramaḍān charity for the poor and needy), that should be paid off. If one has not done his or her Hajj, despite its being *Farḍ*, an absolute obligation, one should do it now; and if it is not possible to do so personally, one should arrange to have it done on his or her behalf (*Ḥajj Badal*). And if, one does not have the time to arrange for an authorized proxy for Hajj, and does not have the convenience to personally make up for whatever was missed and the *Qaḍā'* of which had become due - during his lifetime - then, he or she should make a *Waṣīyyah* (will) so that their inheritors or heirs could take care of paying the *Fidyah* (ransom) of the obligations due against him or her, or make arrangements for Ḥajj on his or her behalf. In short, for 'the correction of deed,' the correction of the future conduct only is not enough - it is also necessary to make amends by paying off for obligations left unperformed in the past.

Similar is the case of the Rights of the Servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-*

'Ibād). If someone's property has been taken unlawfully, it should be returned to him, or have him forgive it. And if someone has been caused pain physically or verbally, forgiveness must be sought from the aggrieved person. And if, it is not possible or within one's control to have him forgive it - for example, he dies; or goes away to a place the address of which is not known - then, the way out is that one should make it a point to keep praying for his forgiveness before Allah Ta'ālā consistently. If so, it can be hoped that the holder of the right will be pleased and the person who was unable to have the forgiveness of the deceased during his lifetime will become absolved of what was due on him.

Verses 56 - 58

قُلْ إِنِّي نُهِيتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ط قُلْ لَا
أَتَّبِعُ أَهْوَاءَكُمْ لا قَدْ ضَلَلْتُ إِذًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾
قُلْ إِنِّي عَلَىٰ بَيِّنَةٍ مِنْ رَبِّي وَكَذَّبْتُمْ بِهِ ط مَا عِنْدِي
مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ ط إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ ط يَقُصُّ الْحَقَّ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ
الْفَاصِلِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾ قُلْ لَوْ أَنَّ عِنْدِي مَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِهِ لَقُضِيَ
الْأَمْرُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ ط وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِالظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

Say, "I have been forbidden from worshiping those you call beside Allah." Say, "I do not follow your desires. In that case, I would be going astray and would no more be of those on the right path. [56]

Say, "I am on clear guidance from my Lord, and you have belied it. What you hurry about is not there with me. The Decision belongs to none but Allah. He relates the Truth and He is the best decision-maker. [57] **Say, "If what you hurry about were with me, the matter between me and you would have been over. And Allah knows the unjust best."** [58]

The Linkage of Verses

In the verses cited above, the answer to disbelievers who were demanding that the Divine punishment should come to them posthaste

was given in: وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْفٰصِلِيْنَ (He is the best decision-maker) while the mention of the perfect power of Almighty Allah was made in: وَاللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ (Allah knows the unjust best). Next from here, there is a description of the encompassment of the Knowledge and Power of Allah Ta'ālā on all conceivable data and destiny.

Verses 59 - 62

وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الْبَرِّ
وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَّرَقَةٍ اِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِىْ ظُلُمٰتِ
الْاَرْضِ وَلَا رَطْبٍ وَّلَا يَابِسٍ اِلَّا فِىْ كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٥٩﴾
وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ
فِيْهِ لِيُقْضٰٓى اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ۚ ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا
كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهٖ وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ
حَفَظَةً ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا وَهُمْ
لَا يُفَرِّطُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ ثُمَّ رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ ؕ اَلَا لَهُ
الْحُكْمُ قف وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾

And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He. And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it, nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth, nor anything fresh or dry, but are in a manifest book. [59]

And He is the One who takes you away by the night and knows what you do by the day, then He makes you rise therein, so that a fixed term may be fulfilled. Thereafter, to Him you are to return; then He will tell you what you have been doing. [60]

And He is Dominant over His slaves and He sends to you those who take care of you until when death comes to one of you, Our deputies take him in full, and they neglect nothing. [61] **Then they are returned to Allah, their real Master. Behold, to Him belongs the judgement, and He is the swiftest reckoner.** [62]

Commentary

How to Stay Safe from Sins - The Master Prescription

Of all the religions of the world, belief in *Tauḥīd*, monotheism in its pure and applied form, is the distinctive feature of Islam. It is also obvious that *Tauḥīd* is not limited to taking the being of Allah Ta'ālā as one. Instead, *Tauḥīd* is believing in Him as being unique and without equal in all His attributes of perfection and in not taking any created being, other than Him, to be a sharer or partner in these attributes of perfection.

Some of these attributes of Divine perfection are: Life, Knowledge, Power, Hearing, Seeing, Will, Creation, Sustenance. Allah is so perfect in all His attributes that no created being can be equal to Him in any of the attributes. Then, out of these, two attributes are most distinct. These are Knowledge (*'Ilm*) and Power (*Qudrah*). His Knowledge encompasses and embraces all existents and non-existents, open and secret, large or small, atoms and particles. So it is with His Power which surrounds and controls everything fully and conclusively. The two verses (59 & 60) cited above describe these two attributes - and these two attributes are mysteriously unique. If anyone were to bring himself around to believe in these two attributes strongly and completely, and thereby start imagining them as being present before him, then, he just cannot ever even think of committing a crime or sin. It goes without saying that here is a person who, in all states of word and deed, rest and movement, remains conscious of the presence and knows that there is someone All-Knowing, All-Aware, All-Powerful watching over him all the time, and Who knows him outside in and inside out and Who is aware of even the intention of the heart and the passing thought of the mind, then, how would he ever be able to take even a tiny step towards any disobedience to his All-Powerful Master? This is the legendary philosopher's stone of what is known as *Istiḥḍār* in religious terminology [or, to make it more recent, it is like building a web site in your heart with this frame of reference being always online, just click and connect! - Tr.]

In the end, we can say that these two verses are sovereign prescriptions which can make one a model human being, correct and groom deeds and morals, and keep them that way all along.

It was said in the first verse (59): وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ اِلَّا هُوَ (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He). The word, 'مَفَاتِيح' (*Mafātīḥ* : keys) is plural. Its singular can be: مَفْتَح : *Maftah*, pronounced with a vowel point a on the letter *Mim*, which denotes treasure; and it could also be: مِفْتَاح : *Miftāḥ*, pronounced with a vowel point i on the letter *Mim*, which means key. The word, *Mafātīḥ* accommodates both meanings. Therefore, some commentators and translators have rendered it as treasures while some others take it as keys. The outcome, however, is the same because owning the keys to the treasures is taken as the owning of the treasures.

Knowledge of the Unseen and Absolute Power: Two Attributes of Allah, not shared by anyone

'*Al-Ghayb*' means things which have not come into existence, or in existence they have come but Allah Ta'ālā has not let anyone know them (Maẓharī). The first kind relates to conditions and events about *Qiyāmah*, or future happenings in the universe - for example, who will be born when and where? Who will do what? Who will live how long? Who will have how many breath counts? Who will take how many steps? Who will die where and buried where? Who will get what sustenance, and how much, and at what time? When will it rain, and where, and how much?

The example of the second kind is the foetus which has come to exist in the womb of a woman, but no one can be certain in the absolute sense, as universally applicable with inevitable reliability and accessibility, about the foetus being good natured or bad tempered, handsome or ugly, even a male or female (the radiological determination of which at the later trimesters of pregnancy is a different matter and does not affect the premises of the present discussion). Similar is the case of many other things which, despite having come into existence, remain unseen and unknown to the created beings.

So, the sentence: عِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِيحُ الْغَيْبِ means that with Allah are the keys (or treasures) of the Unseen. The sense of being 'with him' (عِنْدَهٗ) is that they are owned by Him and are in His possession. The outcome is that He is the One who has control of the treasures of the Unseen and it is He who has the exclusive power to bring them into existence and make them manifest as and when He has determined. This is as has been

said in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān : وَإِنْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَآئِنُهُ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَّعْلُومٍ which means: We have treasures of everything, but We send them down in a particular measure (15:21).

In short, from this one sentence, it stands proved that the knowledge of Allah is perfect, and so is His power, and also that this all-encompassing knowledge and absolute power is the exclusive attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu,* and that no one can acquire or have it. By putting the word, عِنْدَهُ (*'indahū*: with Him) before, according to the rules of the Arabic grammar, a pointed reference has been made towards this restriction and particularity. Immediately after, this hint has been changed into full clarity when, to drive the point home, it was said: لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ (No one knows them but He).

So, this sentence proves two things: (1) The awareness of Allah about everything Unseen by virtue of His all-encompassing knowledge, and His being dominant over all of them by virtue of His perfect power; and (2) The inability of any created being or thing, other than Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, to acquire or have such knowledge and power.

The meaning of the word, '*Al-Ghayb*' (Unseen), as in the terminology of the Qur'ān, which has been stated above (with reference to Tafsīr Maẓharī) - that it means things which have not yet come into existence, or have come into existence but have not yet been fully unveiled to any created being - was to be kept in sight, the common doubts which bother people when they take a shallow view of the question of *Ghayb*, would be automatically removed.

Usually what happens is that people take the word, *Al-Ghayb* (Unseen) in a literal sense, that is, that which is absent from our knowledge and perception - whether the sources of acquiring its knowledge be present in the sight of others - thus, they would start calling that too as the *Ghayb*. As a result, all sorts of doubts abound. Take the example of astrology, divination of fortunes mathematically ('*Ilmul-Jafr* : The knowledge of *Jafr*; vulg. '*Jafar*'), geomancy ('*Ilmur-Raml*: The knowledge of *Raml*; vulg. '*Ramal*', meaning divination by means of figures and lines in the sand), or palmistry and things like that which are harnessed to acquire the knowledge of future events. Or, there may be someone who gets to know about future events through *Kashf* (illumination) and *Ilhām* (inspiration). Or, there are our

weather forecasters who by examining things like the drift, power and velocity of the monsoons predict rains and storms a lot of which turns out to be right too. But, common people hasten to take all these to be the Knowledge of the Unseen. Therefore, they start doubting about these verses of the Holy Qur'ān thinking that the Qur'ān tells us that the *'Ilm* of the *Ghayb*, the knowledge of the Unseen, is an attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, while observation shows that others too get to acquire it.

The answer is clear. If Allah Ta'ālā has made one of His servants informed on some future event, that then, in the terminology of the Qur'ān, does not remain what the *'Ilm* of *Ghayb* or the knowledge of the Unseen is. Similarly, in accordance with the Qur'ānic terminology, knowledge (*'Ilm*) which can be acquired through means and instruments (technology) is no Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*). Examples of this could be the weather reports of the meteorological departments and bureaus, or the diagnosis of the hidden condition of a patient by feeling the pulse (manually or instrumentally). The reason is that the weather forecaster or the physician got the chance to announce such information only when the substance of these events comes into existence and becomes obvious. The only difference is that it does not manifest itself openly until that time; it reveals itself, through technical instruments, to experts. People at large remain unaware. And when this substance becomes stronger, its manifestation becomes common. For this reason, weather forecasters cannot come up with what would be the breaking news of rains that will come one or two months from now - because the substantial evidence of rains has not presented itself before them. Similarly, no physician can diagnose the status of medicine or food taken a year or two ago, or a year or two after, by feeling the pulse (manually or instrumentally) today - because that does not habitually leave any effect on the pulse.

In short, these are things the existence of which is foretold by examining their traces and signs. Now, when the traces, signs and substances of these have come into existence, that does not remain part of the Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*); rather, it has become a matter of observation. However, because of its being refined or weak, it has not become public knowledge. When it becomes stronger, it will

become a matter of common observation too.

In addition to this, the awareness acquired from all these things, despite that so much has taken place, still remains in the class of estimation and calculation. The real *'Ilm'* or Knowledge is the name of Certitude. That does not come out of any of these. That is why events attesting to the error of such information are many and frequent.

As for astrology and other disciplines, whatever there is based on mathematical computation is knowledge, but not *Al-Ghayb* (Unseen). It is like someone computes existing data and says that the sun will rise today at the hour of five and forty one minutes; or, there will be a solar or lunar eclipse on such and such date in such and such a month. It is obvious that determining time by calculating the speed of that which is perceptible through the senses is very much like announcing the news of planes and trains reaching airports and stations. Moreover, the claim to be able to know things through astrology etc. is nothing but deception. The emergence of one truth out of a hundred lies is no knowledge.

When X-Ray equipment was invented, it was hoped that the determination of the sex of the foetus will be possible, but it did not serve the purpose satisfactorily (besides being radiologically harmful). Experts in our time (specially those associated with digital imaging who study the foetus in section view, or use water-induced method to let the foetus float in the womb which helps determine digitally if it is a boy) too are helpless as far as the first trimester of pregnancy is concerned. Nothing can be known at that stage.[1] But, during the later trimesters, predictions are made which can be called technical approximations at best and cannot be classed as certain knowledge and absolute awareness. Sometimes predictions can be correct, at others faulty or misread. This is not the Certitude of *'Ilm al-Ghayb*, nor qualifies as such.

The gist of the assertion is: That which is *Al-Ghayb* in the terminology of the Qur'ān is something no one knows but the most sacred

1. Even the test of genes to determine the gender of a child, cannot work before a certain stage of pregnancy which again is a matter of observation, and not the knowledge of the unseen. (Muhammad Taqi Usmani)

Allah. As for what people habitually get to know through causation or intrumentation is not really the *Ghayb* - though, it may be so called because of not having been manifested openly.

Similarly, when part of the knowledge of what belongs to the *Ghayb* has been given to some prophet or messenger, through Waḥy (revelation), or to a man of Allah (*Waliy*) through *Kashf* (illumination) and *Ilhām* (inspiration), that then, does not remain *Ghayb*. This is called 'أَنْبَآءُ الْغَيْبِ' (the reports or news of the Unseen) in the Holy Qur'ān, and not *Al-Ghayb*. This appears in several verses of the Qur'ān, for example: تِلْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَآ إِلَيْكَ (These are some reports from the Unseen [events] which We reveal to you - 11:49). Therefore, when it is said: لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ إِلَّا هُوَ (No one knows them but He) in the present verse, there is no room for any doubt or exemption in it.

In this particular sentence, a special attribute of Allah has been pointed out - that He is the Knower of the Unseen (*'Ālim al-Ghayb*). The sentences that follow contain a description of the knowledge of the Seen (*'Ilmush-Shahādah*), that is, the knowledge of things present and existing, in sharp contrast to the knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilmul-Ghayb*). They too establish that the knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* is all-encompassing leaving not the minutest particle outside its reach. It was said: And He knows what is in the land and the sea. Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it, nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth, which too is within His knowledge; and so is, in His knowledge, everything fresh or wet or dry in the whole universe - and all of which lies recorded in writing on *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ*, the Preserved Tablet.

To sum up, it can be said that Allah Ta'ālā has two unique attributes of knowledge in which no angel or prophet or another created being shares with Him. These are: the Knowledge of the Unseen (*'Ilm al-Ghayb*) and the All-Encompassing Knowledge of existents (*al-'Ilm al-Muḥīṭ*). These attributes have been described with a system. The first sentence says: وَعِنْدَهٗ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَآ إِلَّا هُوَ (And with Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He). This was about the first attribute. In the sentences that follow, the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah about His universe of existents was identified first by saying: وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِى الْبَرِّ وَ الْبَحْرِ (And He knows what is in the land and the sea). It

means the whole universe and all existents. This is like saying morning and evening in the sense of all the time or saying the East and the West in the sense of the whole world. Thus, by saying land and sea the sense given is that of the whole universe with its existents. So, the knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* covers whatever there is.

Further on, this was explained by saying that the knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā is not limited to what is big, He also knows what is the minutest and the most concealed: وَمَا تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَّرَقَةٍ اِلَّا يَعْلَمُهَا (Not a leaf ever falls but He knows it). It means that the falling of every leaf in the whole wide world - before it falls, when it falls and after it falls - remains within His knowledge. He knows how many times each leaf on a tree will swing and sway and when and where it will fall and through what circumstances it will go through. The mention of 'fall' at this place is perhaps indicative of the life cycle of the leaf. Its fall from the tree is the end of its growth and botanical life. Its last condition has been pointed out here as a mirror to the rest of its conditions.

After that it was said: وَلَا حَبَّةٍ فِیْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْاَرْضِ (Nor a grain in the dark hollows of the earth). Mentioned first was a leaf which falls in common sight. After that, it was a grain which is sowed in fields by a farmer, or gets buried somewhere in the dark and deep belly of the earth. Then, the same all-surrounding knowledge of Allah has been pointed out through things fresh and dry. In the end it was said that with Allah all these things were present in writing. According to some commentators, 'كِتٰبٍ مُّبِيْنٍ' (a manifest book) means *al-Lawḥ al-Maḥfūẓ*, the Preserved Tablet. Some others say that it denotes Divine Knowledge. It has been identified with 'a manifest book' because what is written stays preserved leaving nothing to chance or mistake or forgetting. This is similar to the all-encompassing knowledge of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, which is not based on conjecture - it is certain.

Many verses of the Holy Qur'ān confirm that the kind of all-encompassing knowledge from which nothing, neither a particle nor its condition, remains excluded is but that of Allah *Subḥānuhu wa* Ta'ālā. It was said in Sūrah Luqmān:

اِنَّهَآ اِنْ تَكُ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِیْ صَخْرَةٍ اَوْ فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ اَوْ فِی
الْاَرْضِ يَاْتِ بِهَا اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَطِيْفٌ خَبِيْرٌ

If it be (anything) even equal to the weight of a grain of mustard-seed, and though it be in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or in the earth, Allah will bring it forth: for Allah is subtle and aware - 31:16.

It appears in the Āyatul-Kursī of Sūrah al-Baqarah:

يَعْلَمُ مَابَيْنَ اَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنْ عِلْمِهِ اِلَّا بِمَاشَآءَ ج

He knows what is before them and what is behind them. And they encompass nothing of His knowledge except what He wills - 2:255

In Sūrah Yunus, it was said:

وَمَا يَعْزُبُ عَنْ رَّبِّكَ مِنْ مِّثْقَالِ ذَرَّةٍ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِى السَّمَآءِ

And not hidden from your Lord is (anything even) the weight of an atom in the earth or in the heaven - 10:61

And it appears in Sūrah Aṭ-Ṭalāq:

وَاَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ،

And that Allah encompasses all things in (His) Knowledge - 65:12

This subject has been dealt with in the Holy Qur'ān at many more places where it has been made very clear that the *'Ilm* of *Al-Ghayb* (as determined in the Qur'ān and explained earlier) or the all-encompassing knowledge of everything in the universe is the exclusive attribute of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. Taking the knowledge of an angel or messenger to be as all-compassing amounts to giving a messenger of Allah the status of Allah Himself and declaring him to be equal to Him - which is Shirk according to the Holy Qur'ān. This aspect of Shirk has been pointed out in Sūrah Al-Shu'arā':

تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كُنَّا لَفِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ اِذْ نُسَوِّيْكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

That is (the *Mushriks* will say in *Qiyāmah*), By Allah, we were in an error manifest when we held you (objects of worship) as equals with the Lord of the Worlds - 26:97,98

No doubt, Allah Ta'ālā had blessed His Messengers عليهم السلام, specially the Last among them صلى الله عليه وسلم, with the knowledge of many things from the Unseen, more than the knowledge of all angels and

prophets, but it is obvious that the knowledge of anyone cannot be equal to that of Allah, nor it can ever be. Otherwise, this will become the kind of excess the Christians committed in their reverence for the prophet when they started equating the prophet with God. This is *Shirk*. May Allah keep all of us protected from it.

Covered this far was the subject of the first verse as explained above. The second verse (60) describes Allah's attribute of power which is also exclusive to Him. It is said:

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يَتَوَفّٰىكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا جَرَحْتُمْ بِالنَّهَارِ ثُمَّ يَبْعَثُكُمْ فِيْهِ لِيُقْضٰٓى اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى ج

> And He is the One who takes you away by night and knows what you do by day, then He makes you rise therein, so that a fixed term may be fulfilled.

Hence, at work here is nothing but the most perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which has opened a window to what happens to human beings in life, in death and in rising again. Everyone sees it everyday. According to *Ḥadīth*, sleep is similar to death in that it does suspend the human body as it would be in death.

By giving an example of sleeping then waking up in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has alerted human beings that the way everyone, every night and every morning, witnesses the spectacle of personally rising up from simulated death (sleep), so it should not be difficult to visualise the certainty of collective death, and then, collective rising after it, which is called *Qiyāmah* or the Last Day. The argument is: The Supreme Being who can make this happen, could make that happen too. With His most perfect Power, this is as it shall be. Therefore, towards the end of the verse it was said: ثُمَّ اِلَيْهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ (Thereafter, to Him you are to return; then He will tell you what you have been doing) meaning thereby that there will be the reckoning of deeds, then, will come their rewards and punishments.

In the third verse, this subject has been further enlarged by saying that Allah Ta'ālā has absolute subduing power over all His servants. As long as He wills to have them living, He assigns angels to protect them as a result of which no one dares harm them. And when one has reached the appointed limit of one's age, these very guardian angels

become the agents of one's death without ever falling short in providing the relevant causes leading to one's death. Then, death is not all, for the matter is still not closed. Instead of that, there is the next phase, that of: رُدُّوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ (Then they are returned to Allah - 62). It means that they will be made to rise again and be presented before Allah Ta'ālā. If, at this point, one were to think of having to appear before the greatest Judge of judges and stand before Him to account for a whole life-time of deeds, one cannot even dare to imagine to come out unscathed and hope to escape punishment. Therefore, along with it, it was said: اِلَى اللّٰهِ مَوْلٰىهُمُ الْحَقِّ (to Allah, their real Master - 62). It means that Allah Ta'ālā is not only the Sovereign and the Judge of judges, He is also the Master and Guardian of His servants who reaches out to help them at all times of their need.

After that, it was said: اَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ (Beware, to Him alone belongs the judgement). This certainly leaves no doubt that He is the best in His decision and decree. However, one may be inclined to think how it will be possible for Allah who is One alone to take care of the reckoning of age-long deeds of billions and billions of human beings? Therefore, after that, it was said: وَهُوَ اَسْرَعُ الْحٰسِبِيْنَ (and He is the swiftest reckoner). It means that taking what is done by Allah on the analogy of what is done by human beings is ignorance. He shall do that in no time. (When His servants at the Mainframe factories of Cray and IBM can churn billions and billions of data in seconds, why anyone in his senses would ever doubt the power of the Maker of all makers ! –Tr.)

Verses 63 - 64

قُلْ مَنْ يُّنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ تَدْعُوْنَهٗ تَضَرُّعًا وَّ خُفْيَةً ۚ لَئِنْ اَنْجٰىنَا مِنْ هٰذِهٖ لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الشّٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ قُلِ اللّٰهُ يُنَجِّيْكُمْ مِّنْهَا وَمِنْ كُلِّ كَرْبٍ ثُمَّ اَنْتُمْ تُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Say, "Who delivers you from the darknesses of the land and the sea when you call Him in humility and low tones (promising that) If He delivers us from this, We shall truly become grateful? [63] **Say, "Allah delivers you from it and from every pain, still, you associate partners with Him."** [64]

Commentary

Some Manifestations of Divine Knowledge and Absolute Power

In previous verses, there was a description of the perfection of Divine Knowledge and Power, and of their unique expanse. Mentioned in the present verse, there are some manifestations of this very Knowledge and Power.

The word: ظُلُمٰتِ (*Ẓulumāt*) in the first verse (63) is the plural of ظُلْمَة (*Ẓulmah*) which means darkness [and which does not have a plural form in English leaving the translator with no choice but to improvise in order to convey the Qur'ānic plural which is necessary as explained]. Thus, the expression: ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ in this verse means the many a darkness found on land and sea. Since darkness is of many kinds, such as, the darkness of night, the darkness of rain clouds, the darkness of dust storms and the darkness under the waves of the sea, it is to include all these kinds of darkness that the word, *Ẓulumāt*, has been used here.

So, the verse means that it was to warn the disbelievers of Makkah against their wrong doings that Allah Ta'ālā ordered the Holy Prophet ﷺ to ask these people as to what they do when they find themselves in deep trouble during their land trips and sea voyages. Is it not that they would forget all about their idols and start calling on none but Allah? At times, they would confess to their modesty and helplessness openly, while at others, they would be admitting it in the heart of their hearts that no one other than Allah could really save them from such catastrophe. And along with this thought, they would promise to Allah that, should Allah save them from this catastropy, they would definitely take to the ways of following truth and being grateful. In other words, once delivered, they would be grateful to Allah, would take Him as their real rescuer and helper, never ascribing any partner to His Divinity because no one they have been worshiping came up to help them in their hour of need. With this experience of theirs in view, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is being asked to find out from them as to who delivers them from their distress and possible destruction? Since their answer was already known as they could have not denied the open fact that no one came to help them in their distress, idol or whatever else they worshipped, except Allah. Therefore, in the second verse (64), Al-

lah Almighty has Himself taken the initiative and commanded the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to tell these people that it is Allah alone who would deliver them from their distress, rather deliver them from every other distress or anxiety they may face in their lives. But, the problem was that they, despite having seen open signs and having found comfort after distress, would go back to *Shirk* and start indulging in the worship of false gods. Strange betrayal and fatal ignorance indeed!

Not only that these two verses tell us about the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā which delivers human beings from their hour of distress, it also emphasizes that the removal of all sorts of hardships, troubles and anxieties is also in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā alone as evident from the behaviour of diehard disbelievers too who are ultimately compelled to turn to Allah when there is nothing left to turn to.

The Moral

May be, this behaviour of the disbelievers, despite its being a major crime in view of their betrayal, has a certain lesson to teach. That they do turn to Allah in the hour of their distress, as their confession of reality under duress, has for us Muslims a lesson to learn with the rasp of a lash - here we are still not prompt enough to remember Allah in our hour of trials despite having faith in the absolute power of Allah Ta'ālā. What happens is that all our attention is rivetted only to material support which we hope would get us out of trouble. No doubt, we do not take idols, icons and images as our saviours, but the tragic fact is that the many material support systems, logistics, mechanized rescuing squads on land, sea and in the air, and the backup of spot and distant instrumentations, have become no less than idols for us. So impressed with them and so engrossed in them we are that we somehow do not seem to think of Allah and His most perfect power.

Accidents and Hardships : The Real Remedy

Take sickness as an example. When we get sick, we think of nothing but our doctors and physicians. Take the example of a storm or flood. Once in it, we look forward to being rescued with material help and material means. We think on them depends our destiny, and in doing so, we just do not seem to remember the very Master of the universe in Whose control lies our destiny. We tend to do this, despite

that the Holy Qur'ān has, time and again, stated it very clearly that hardships and accidents of the world are generally the outcome of the evil deeds of human beings themselves, and a mild sampling of the punishment of the Hereafter. If looked at from this angle, these hardships are, in a way, mercy for Muslims - for, through them, heedless people are, so to say, given a shot in the arm, so that they may use this occasion to survey their evil deeds and start thinking about how not to indulge in them anymore whereby they could remain safe from the greater and harsher punishment of the Hereafter. The same subject has been taken up elsewhere in the Holy Qur'ān in the following words:

وَلَنُذِيقَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَدْنَىٰ دُونَ الْعَذَابِ الْأَكْبَرِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ

> We shall make them taste a lesser punishment, prior to the greater punishment, so that they may return - 32:21.

Says another verse of the Qur'ān:

وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِّنْ مُّصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ وَ يَعْفُو عَنْ كَثِيرٍ ،

> The hardship that reaches you is an outcome of your evil deeds while many of them Allah forgives - 42:30.

Talking about the verse of Sūrah Ash-Shūrā quoted above, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

> By Him in whose hands lies my life, the common scratch from a piece of wood suffered by a human being, or a faltering of step or an itching in vein are all after-effects of some sin while the sins which Allah Ta'ālā forgives are many.

As said by 'Allāma Al-Bayḍāwī, it means that the diseases and calamities faced by criminals and sinners are all vestiges of sins while the diseases and calamities of those who are infallible to or protected from sins are there to test their patience and fortitude, and to bless them with the higher ranks of Paradise.

So, the essential outcome is that the diseases, accidents, hardships, pain and anxiety faced even by human beings at large - who are not free of sins - are all the consequences and vestiges of sins.

This also tells us that the real cure and the primary way out of all such distressing happenings is that people should turn to Allah *Jalla*

Sha'nuhu, seek forgiveness from Him for all their past sins, and firmly resolve that they would abstain from them in the future, and pray to Him alone that He, in His mercy, removes their hardships.

However, it never means that the use of material means through medicine and treatment while sick, or to employ material methods of confronting accidents and calamities when struck by them, are useless efforts. Instead of that, the purpose is to emphasize that we should believe in Allah Ta'ālā as the prime mover and maker of things and happenings and, as for the use of material means, we should use them too taking them to be nothing but His blessing, because all means and intruments are invariably His creation and His blessings which serve human beings under His command and will. The fire, the air, the water, the dust, and all forces on the face of the earth are but subservient to the command of Allah Ta'ālā. Unless He so wills, neither can the fire burn, nor can water extinguish, nor a medicine bring benefit, nor some food hurt. Experience bears the truth that human beings once they become heedless to Allah Ta'ālā and start relying on their self-invented defence mechanisms what happens is that with every addition to their material logistics, there comes a relative increase in concerns and calamities.

That a medicine or clinical procedure may turn out to be personally beneficial at a given time, or a material way out to some problem may succeed, is quite possible even when one is involved with heedlessness and sin. But, when looked at collectively, in the perspective of the whole creation of Allah, all manifestations of the reliance on the material appear to be unsuccessful. Today, the number and variety of articles and instruments invented to remove pain and drudgery and to provide comfort and luxury with a gusto that knows no stopping, are things man had not even dreamt of only half a century ago. Who does not know that people at that time were totally deprived of ever-new life-saving drugs, medicine delivery systems, procedures, surgeries, experts, technicians, labs and hospitals and nursing homes? But, seen in a wider perspective, man deprived of all these facilities fifty years ago, was not as sick and harassed as the man of late nineties. Similarly, we have vaccines to fight against epidemics, mechanized units to control fire, medical and para-medical squads to cover accidents, and an

overseeing communications system which would hasten emergency information, relevant support of professionals and equipment. But, somehow the more we increase our material defences against accidents and calamities, the more we seem to be affected by them. To what reason could we ascribe this except that during the period now behind us the measure of heedlessness to and disobedience of the Creator of the universe of our existence was not as pronounced as it is in our day. Those people used their articles of comfort as blessings from Allah Ta'ālā for which they were grateful too. But, the modern man wants to use these conveniences with a sense of hightened self-achievement which is rebellion in disguise. Naturally enough, despite all instrumentations and gadgeteries, men and materials, they cannot make people immune from being hit by such hardships.

Summing up the main elements of our explanations, we can say that Muslims should specially take a lesson from this reference to disbelievers that they too remembered Allah when in distress. It is the duty of a true Muslim that he should, in order to remove his pain and anxiety in distress, first rely on and turn to Allah Ta'ālā, much more than simply relying on and turning to the material solutions of his trying situation. If he fails to do that, he will meet the same end being witnessed today. Plans will generally fall flat. A thousand efforts are made to stop floods and to minimize losses caused by them, but they keep coming. Ever-new methods of treating diseases are found and used, but diseases keep increasing. Devices and theories are employed to check rising prices of things - which seem to be effective too, though on the surface - but the result on the whole is that prices keep rising on almost a daily basis. Think of crimes like theft, robbery, kidnaping, bribery and smuggling. Governments all over the world, including the most advanced, are employing all sorts of material means to stop them. But, common people do not have to look into a crime graph to find out what is happening - they see that crimes are increasing. We can only wish that human beings of the modern era would do well by rising a little bit higher than the levels of person, identity, profit and loss, and surveying conditions prevailing, then, they would come to realize that, when seen collectively, all our material efforts have failed, in fact, they are compounding our problems. Then, if they were to look at the remedy proposed by the Qur'ān which tells us that there is only

one way of staying safe from all kinds of hardship, and that is to turn to the Creator of the universe. Whatever material solutions there are, they are fine, they too should be used as blessings from Him. Other than this, there is no way to ideal security.

Verses 65 - 67

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ اَوْ
مِنْ تَحْتِ اَرْجُلِكُمْ اَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا وَّيُذِيْقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَاْسَ
بَعْضٍ ؕ اُنْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾
وَكَذَّبَ بِهٖ قَوْمُكَ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ ؕ قُلْ لَّسْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ ﴿٦٦﴾
لِكُلِّ نَبَاٍ مُّسْتَقَرٌّ وَّسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Say, "He is fully capable that He should send a punishment from above you or from beneath your feet, or to put you in confusion through divisions and make some of you taste troubles through some others." See how We bring forth a variety of Verses, so that they may understand. [65] **And your people have belied it despite its being the truth.**

Say, "I have not been entrusted with your task. [66] **For every event there is a point (of time and place) to occur, and (that) you will know."** [67]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was one manifestation of the knowledge and power of Allah Almighty that He alone can remove human distress and whoever calls on Him while in difficulty shall find His help before his eyes. The reason is that He is perfectly powerful over the whole universe and He is also perfectly merciful to His entire creation. No one else has that perfect power and universal mercy.

Mentioned in the present verses is another side of His perfect power - that He can punish any individual or group for its contumacy if He wills to do so. And doing so is easy for Him. To punish a criminal, He needs no police or army or helper like the rulers of the mortal world. This aspect was stated by saying: هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلٰٓى اَنْ يَّبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِّنْ فَوْقِكُمْ اَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ

أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا (He is fully capable that He should send a punishment from above you or from beneath your feet, or to put you in confusion through divisions).

Three Kinds of Divine Punishment

Identified here are three kinds of Divine Punishment: (1) That which comes from above, (2) that which comes from beneath, and (3) that which spreads out from within. Then, by bringing the word, ' عَذَابًا ' with nunnation (*tanwin*) on an indefinite noun (*nakirah*), a warning - as admitted by the rules of Arabic grammar - has been served that there could be different sub-divisions and forms within these three kind.

According to commentators of the Qur'ān, there have been many examples of punishment coming from above among past communities as the flood which came upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام, the wind storm which overtook the people of 'Ād, the raining of stones on the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام, the raining of blood and frogs upon the Banī Isrā'īl and the pelting of pebbles by flights of birds on the People of the Elephant (*aṣḥāb al-fīl*) when they invaded Makkah which left all of them reduced to chaff chewed out.

Similarly, various forms of the coming of punishment from beneath have also appeared among past communities. For the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام there already was the punishment from above in the form of rain-storm, then they were also caught up in the punishment from beneath when the water under the ground started forcing out whereby they came into the grip of two punishments at the same time, that is, the punishment from above and the punishment from beneath. The people of the Pharaoh were drowned in the punishment from beneath their feet. Qārūn (Korah) fell a victim to this very punishment when he, along with his legendary treasures, sank down into the earth as if swallowed by it.

Early *Tafsīr* authorities, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه and Mujāhid have said that the punishment from above means that cruel rulers and merciless officials come to rule over a people while the punishment from beneath means that one's own subordinates and servants turn into traitors, idlers and thieves.

Some sayings of the Holy Prophet ﷺ also confirm the *Tafsīr* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās given above. The saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which follows has been reported in Mishkāt with reference to Shu'abul-Īmān of Al-Baihaqī: كَمَا تَكُوْنُوْنَ كَذٰلِكَ يُؤَمَّرُ عَلَيْكُمْ , that is, 'as are your deeds, good or bad, so shall be your rulers and officials set upon you.' It means : If you are good, and obedient to Allah Ta'ālā, your rulers and officials will also be merciful and just. And if your deeds are evil, you will find that merciless and unjust rulers and officials have been set upon you.' The well-known saying: اَعْمَالُكُمْ عُمَّالُكُمْ (Your deeds : your rulers) means just the same.

According to a narration from Abī Nu'aym in his Hilyah appearing in Mishkāt, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

> Allah Ta'ālā says: I am Allah. There is no god worthy of worship but Me. I am the Master of kings. And I am the Sovereign. The hearts of kings are in My hands. When My servants obey Me, I pour mercy in the hearts of their kings and officials. And when My servants disobey Me, I harden the hearts of their rulers against them. They make them taste all kinds of evil punishments. Therefore, do not waste your energy in speaking ill of the rulers and officials. Turn to Allah and correct your deeds so that I may put your affairs right.

Similarly, there is a narration from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها in Abū Dāwūd and Nasā'ī in which the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said:

> When Allah Ta'ālā wishes well for a ruler, He gives them a good minister and deputy so that he may remind the ruler if he forgets something, and who helps the ruler when he acts right. And when some evil is destined for a ruler, evil people are made his ministers and deputies.

In the light of these *Ḥadīth* narrations and the explanation of related verses, the outcome is that hardships faced by people at the hands of their rulers are a punishment which comes from above - and that which is inflicted through servants and subordinates is a punishment which comes from beneath. They are no stray accidents. In fact, they are a punishment of one's deeds under a Divine law. Imām Sufyān

Ath-Thawrī said: When a sin gets to be committed by me, I see its effect on my servant, even on my horse I ride and the donkey I use to carry my things. I can feel the change in their temper because all of them start disobeying me. Maulānā Rūmi, in his famous Mathnawī, says that Allah Ta'ālā, by putting you under the apparent punishment which causes pain to you through ill-treatment at the hands of your cruel rulers or faithless subordinates in this mortal world, actually wishes to turn your attention towards Himself, so that you get alerted and start trying to make your deeds good, and as a result of which, you may save yourself from the much greater punishment of the Hereafter.

To sum up, we can say that, according to the *Tafsīr* of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās, the oppression of rulers is the punishment which comes from above, and the dishonesty, idling and treachery of subordinates is the punishment which comes from beneath, and the remedy for both is the same - that everyone should look back and examine what each one has done, leave paths of error, avoid being disobedient to Allah, then, nature will be commanded to take its desired course creating conditions which would remove the hardship. Otherwise, trying to remove them and correct the situation through material ways and means alone will be nothing but self-deception, an experience we have been having all the time.

The different explanations of the punishment from above and from beneath which you have heard just now are really no different from each other - because the word, عَذَابًا (*'adhāban*) meaning 'punishment,' which appears in this verse , in fact, embraces all these explanations. Punishments coming from the skies like the rocks, pebbles, blood, fire, flood, and the oppression of rulers, are all included under the punishment from above. As for the parting of the earth and the sinking of a people in it, or being drowned in water forcing out from the earth, or becoming a victim of problems at the hands of subordinates, all these are punishments from beneath.

There is a third kind of punishment mentioned in this verse, and that is: أَوْ يَلْبِسَكُمْ شِيَعًا (or put you in confusion through divisions ...). It means that you may be split into parties confronting each other and it becomes a punishment from within. The word, يَلْبِسَكُمْ (*yalbisakum*

translated as 'put you in confusion') used here comes from the root: لبس (*labasa*) which basically means to hide or cover up. It is in that sense it is used to refer to clothes which cover the human body. And for this reason, its derivation: التباس (*iltibās*) is used in the sense of doubt, where the meaning of what is said remains hidden, that is, it is not open and clear.

As for the word: شيع (*shiya'*), it is the plural form of: شِيْعَة (*shi'ah*) which means to be a follower, adherent or partisan of someone. It appears in the Holy Qur'ān: وَاِنَّ مِنْ شِيْعَتِهٖ لَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ that is, 'following in the footsteps of Nūḥ عليه السلام is Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - 37:83.' Therefore, in common usage, the word: شِيْعَة (*shi'ah*) is used to denote a group which gets together for a particular purpose, and its members help each other in achieving that purpose. In the current idiom, it would mean a faction or party.

So, the verse could be translated in the sense that one kind of '*Adhāb*' (punishment) is that a nation or community breaks up into factions and parties and starts confronting each other. Therefore, when this verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet ﷺ addressed Muslims and told them:

لَاتَرْجِعُوْا بَعْدِیْ كُفَّارًا يَّضْرِبُ بَعْضُكُمْ رِقَابَ بَعْضٍ

> Do not renege after me becoming like disbelievers striking at the necks of each other. (Deduced by Ibn Abī Ḥātim from Zayd ibn Aslam as in Maẓharī)

Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ رضى الله عنه says: Once we were going with the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم. When we reached Masjid Banī Mu'āwiyah, the Messenger of Allah صلى الله عليه وسلم went into the *Masjid* and offered two *raka'ah* of Ṣalāh. We too offered two *raka'ah*. After that, he became busy with *Du'ā*, and kept praying for a fairly long time. After that, he said: 'I asked my *Rabb* for three things: (1) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by drowning: Allah Ta'ālā answered this prayer; (2) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by famine and hunger: This too was answered; (3) My *Ummah* may not be destroyed by infighting: I was stopped from making this prayer.' (Maẓharī with reference to Baghawī)

Another *Ḥadīth* on the same subject has been reported from Sayy-

idnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه where one of the three prayers is that 'may Allah not set an enemy upon my *Ummah* who destroys all of them.' This prayer was answered. As for infighting and mutual confrontation, he was forbidden from making the prayer.

These narrations prove that, though the kind of punishments which visited earlier communities from above them and from beneath them and which destroyed all of them, will not visit the *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم - but, there is one '*Adhāb*' (punishment) which will keep visiting this *Ummah* too during their life in the present world. That '*Adhāb*' is their infighting and the mutual confrontation between their factions and parties. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has emphatically forbidden his *Ummah* from becoming divided in sects, factions and parties and from challenging and fighting each other among themselves. Actually, he has, on every possible occasion, tried to put the fear of Allah in every heart by warning that the Divine punishment, if it has to come upon Muslims within their life in this mortal world, it will come because of nothing else but their mutual confrontation and infighting.

This subject has been further clarified in a verse of Sūrah Hūd where it is said:

وَلَا يَزَالُوْنَ مُخْتَلِفِيْنَ اِلَّا مَنْ رَّحِمَ رَبُّكَ (هود)

But they will continue in their differences, except those whom Allah has blessed with mercy - 11:118

In this light, it becomes all the more clear that those who differ with each other (without a valid Islamic legal justification) are either deprived of Divine mercy, or far-removed from it. Before we move on to analyse the subject, quoted below are two verses from Sūrah 'Āl-'Imrān which would make the problem easier to understand:

وَاعْتَصِمُوْا بِحَبْلِ اللّٰهِ جَمِيْعًا وَّلَا تَفَرَّقُوْا

And hold on to the cord of Allah, all of you, and be not divided - 3:103

وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ تَفَرَّقُوْا وَاخْتَلَفُوْا

And do not be like those who became divided and fell into disputes ... - 3:105

The Anatomy and Rationale of Differences

The essence of all *Āyāt* and *Riwāyāt* (Verses and *Ḥadīth* Narrations) presented here is that difference is ill-fated and blameworthy. If we were to ponder over the causes of the decline and dismemberment of Muslims materially and spiritually, we will see that the root of most troubles lies in this very mutual difference and discord we are talking about. Unfortunately, as a result of our own misdeeds, this '*Adhāb*' has come to sit on our heads like an octopus. Otherwise, we were a people whose pivot of unity was one single *Kalimah* of لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (There is no god worthy of worship but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). All men and women having faith in this *Kalimah*, anywhere on this earth, speaking any language, of any colour, of any race, any lineage, were brothers and sisters to each other. Mountains and rivers were no handicap in their unity. The difference of race, family, colour and language were no hurdles in their way. Their unity was tied with this *Kalimah* irrespective of their nationality. That they were Arabs or Egyptians or Syrians or Turks or Indian or Chinese did not matter. These divisions were simply for the sake of identity and introduction, and that was it, no more. The poet of neo-Islamic Renaissance, Muḥammad Iqbal summarized it by saying:

درویش خدامست نہ شرقی ہے نہ غربی
گھر اس کا نہ دلّی نہ صفاہان نہ سمر قند

The dervish of Allah cares not
For he is neither of the East, nor of the West
For him there is no home
Neither Delhi, nor Isfahan, nor Samarqand ...

In our day, intrigues backed by constantly concerted efforts have succeeded in dividing them once again into racial, linguistic and regional nationalities. Worse came to happen when these very entities, hit by internal disruption and chaos, ended up splitting themselves into many more additonal factions. The people whose hallmark was to forgive, forego and sacrifice even in the case of others when they would readily surrender their most just rights for the sake of avoiding confrontation now have many individuals within their fold who would not hesitate to sacrifice even the most precious relationship for the sake of the cheapest and the meanest of gains. This is the difference born out

of self-interest, wanton desires and fancies which is a bad omen for any community or nation, and certainly a cash punishment for them right here in the present world.

However, it is necessary to understand at this point the difference which has been declared in the Qur'ān as Divine punishment, and deprivation from Divine mercy, is that particular difference which either appears in Principles and Beliefs or is because of self-interest, wanton desires and fancies. Not included here is the particular difference of opinion which was based on the Principles of *Ijtihad* carried out in the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, and it was under these Principles that the difference of opinion in subsidiary matters and *masā'il* has continued being there among the jurists (*Fuqahā'*) of the Muslim *Ummah* from the early period of *Ṣaḥābah* (Companions) and *Tābi'īn*. (Successors to Companions). It should be borne in mind that in these subsidiary matters, the frame of reference under which such difference of opinion may show up is restricted to Qur'ān, Sunnah and *Ijmā'* (consensus). Here, the intention of everyone is to obey and act in accordance with the injunctions of Qur'ān and Sunnah. But, the difference which emerges here is that of *Ijtihad* and opinion in the duduction of solutions to subsidiary problems as interpreted from words left condensed or ambiguous in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Such difference has been called *Raḥmah* or mercy in *Ḥadīth*.

The following narration has been reported in Al-Jāmi' Al-Saghīr [with reference to Naṣr Maqdisī, Baihaqī & Imām al-Haramayn]: إِخْتِلَافُ أُمَّتِيْ رَحْمَةٌ (The difference of my *Ummah* is mercy). It has been made particular to the community of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم because any difference which arises among the *'Ulamā'*, who uphold nothing but the truth, and Muslim jurists who are unalienably God-fearing, shall always be governed by the principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Then, this would be with an intention which is absolutely true and with an approach which is inevitably for the good pleasure of Allah. This difference will never be motivated by any self-interest or desire for recognition, office or money. Therefore, that difference will never become the cause of confrontations. Instead of that, as determined by 'Allama 'Abdur-Rauf al-Munāwī, the commentator of Al-Jāmi' Al-Saghīr, the different approaches (*Maslak*) of the jurists of Muslim community will have the

same status which was given to different religious law systems of the blessed prophets in past periods of time - in that they all were, despite being different, nothing but the very injunctions of Allah. Thus, the different approaches (*Maslak*) credited to the great Mujtahid Imāms of the Muslim *Ummah* shall be called, because of their being under the principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah, nothing but the commandments and injunctions of Allah and *Rasūl*.

An example of such difference based on *Ijtihād* can be readily seen on the main streets of our cities where the streets are demarcated into various sections or lanes for the convenience of those who move on them. A section would be used by buses while another by cars and vans. Similarly, a section of the street may be reserved for cyclists and pedestrians. Though this division of one main street into several lanes is outwardly a form of difference but, since everyone is headed in one single direction and everyone moving through each lane will ultimately reach one desired destination. Therefore, this difference of routes or approaches, rather than being harmful, is functionally useful for all movers - a lot of space and mercy indeed.

This is the reason why leading Mujtahid Imāms and the Jurists of the Muslim Community agree that the *Maslak* or approach taken by any of them is not false, and it is not permissible for anyone to call those who follow it as being sinners. The essence of the difference in *Madhab* or approaches or schools of thought represented by Mujtahid Imāms and Jurists has a limited frame of reference. The approach taken by one Mujtahid happens to be weightier in his sight, but he himself would not call the approach of another Mujtahid as false. In fact, they pay due regard and respect to each other. A look into the mutual relationships of the jurists (*Fuqahā'*) among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn*. and the four leading Mujtahid Imāms and the events and happenings surrounding them are open testimony to the fact that, despite their differences in technical, intellectual and juristic approaches, they had excellent mutual working relationships, giving each other full respect and recognition. That they would be arrayed against each other in rancour, hostility and infighting was absolutely out of question in their case. The same spirit and *modus operandi* continued with those who later on came as followers of the main juristic schools - as far as

they remained adhering to sound knowledge and honest attitude, their mutual relationships remained based on cordiality and respect like their predecessors.

This is the difference we are talking about. This difference is mercy indeed, for people a source of myriad openings and conveniences and leaves, and certainly a reservoir of beneficial results. As far as subsidiary questions are concerned, the truth is that the difference of proponents in them is not harmful, if it remains within its proper bounds. In fact, it serves as an aid in enlarging and identifying different aspects of a question which makes it possible to arrive at a sound resolution of the problem. It goes without saying that in a meeting of honest minds, the absence of some difference of opinion about a question is just not conceivable. Something like this can happen among a set of people who cannot or do not understand the problem at all, or among pragmatic secular people who would not hesitate to agree to an opinion, even though against their conscience, just to accomodate some party, pressure group or interest lobby.

So, difference of opinion which is within its bounds, that is, not in the categorical imperatives of the Qur'ān and Sunnah concerning articles of faith and decisive injunctions, and which is only in subsidiary questions requiring *Ijtihād* , and that too where the definitive texts of Qur'ān and Sunnah are either silent or ambiguous, and again if the effort so made does not go to the outer limit of name calling, blame throwing and infighting, then, that difference of opinion will, instead of being harmful, be beneficial - a blessing and mercy. Think of this universe of our experience. Things differ in shape, form, colour, smell, property and functional benefits. There are countless living organisms. They differ, so do human beings, different temperaments, occupations, skills, ways of living - these differences are the charm of living which provides open avenues of countless benefits.

Many people who are not aware of this reality, would look down even upon the normal differences in the legal solution of problems (*fatāwa*) credited to great Jurists and true *'Ulamā.'* They are heard complaining: When *'Ulamā'* differ, where do we go? Frankly, this is a simple matter. Take the example of a sick person about whose condition physicians differ. Naturally everyone tries to find out a physician

who has the desired experience and technical expertise and he is the one entrusted with the charge of treating the patient. No one goes out speaking ill of other doctors in town. The same thing happens in legal cases. Lawyers may differ in their opinions. Naturally people entrust their case to a lawyer who is effecient and experienced in their estimation, and act on his advice. They do not run around maligning others in that profession. This principle should be operative here too. When the *Fatāwa* given by *'Ulamā'* about a problem turn out to be different (reasons to be investigated in the parameters of the original inquiry), then, one should make his best efforts to locate an *'Ālim* who, in their judgement, is better than others in *'Ilm* (expertise in religious knowledge) and *Taqwā* (fear of Allah, fear of being responsible before Him) and follow the advice given by him. There is no need for them to waste their time in finding fault with other *'Ulamā.'*

In I'lām Al-Muwwaqqi'īn, 'Allāmah Ḥāfiẓ ibn al-Qaiyyim has reported that the choice of an expert Mufti - and in case of a difference of opinion, the giving of preference to the *Fatwā* of an *'Ālim* who, in the opinion of the seeker, is the best of all in *'Ilm* and *Taqwā* - is the duty of every Muslim himself who has such a problem on hand. That he starts giving preference to one of the different *Fatāwa* of *'Ulamā* is certainly not his job. But, it is no one's job but his own that he should act according to the *Fatwā* of anyone from among the Muftīs and *'Ālims* whom he considers the best in knowledge and honesty. After that, he should not go about denouncing other Muftīs and 'Ālims. Once a person has done what is required of him, he is totally free of blame in the sight of Allah. In case, the giver of *Fatwā* did make a mistake in the real sense, then, he himself will be responsible for it.

In short, not every difference is absolutely blameworthy, nor every agreement absolutely praiseworthy and desirable. If thieves, robbers and rebels were to join hands and form a union of their own, who would not take this union of theirs blameworthy and fatal for the society. Contrary to this, police action or public protest against such groups is considered praiseworthy and beneficial by all reasonable people.

This tells us that the problem does not lie in difference of opinion, nor does it lie in acting according to a particular opinion, instead, all

problems show up when others are suspected and slandered - which is an outcome of lack of knowledge and honesty and plenty of self-serving desires and fancies. When a nation or country stoops to that level, this merciful difference is changed into punishing difference. Of all the people, Muslims themselves split into parties, fight among themselves, even do the impossible by killing each other. Hurling insults on others is taken to be a defence of religious position, although, religion has nothing to do with such excess and aggression. In fact, this is the confrontation and fighting which has been sternly prohibited by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. In authentic *Āḥadīth*, it has been cited as the cause of peoples and nations going astray. (Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah)

In the second verse (66), after mentioning the anti-truth stand taken by the Quraysh of Makkah, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, also from the same tribe, has been instructed that he should tell those people asking about the precise time when the promised punishment will come that he has not been appointed to do that for them. The truth is that for everything there is a point of time as determined in Divine knowledge. It will come at its own time, and they will see for themselves what happens when it does.

Verses 68 - 73

وَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ الَّذِينَ يَخُوضُونَ فِي آيَاتِنَا فَأَعْرِضْ عَنْهُمْ حَتَّىٰ
يَخُوضُوا فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ ۚ وَإِمَّا يُنْسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَانُ فَلَا تَقْعُدْ
بَعْدَ الذِّكْرَىٰ مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِينَ يَتَّقُونَ
مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَلَٰكِنْ ذِكْرَىٰ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾
وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَلَهْوًا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا
وَذَكِّرْ بِهِ أَنْ تُبْسَلَ نَفْسٌ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيٌّ
وَلَا شَفِيعٌ ۚ وَإِنْ تَعْدِلْ كُلَّ عَدْلٍ لَا يُؤْخَذْ مِنْهَا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ
أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا ۖ لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا
يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قُلْ أَنَدْعُو مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُنَا وَلَا يَضُرُّنَا

وَ نُرَدُّ عَلٰٓى اَعْقَابِنَا بَعْدَ اِذْ هَدٰىنَا اللّٰهُ كَالَّذِى اسْتَهْوَتْهُ الشَّيٰطِيْنُ
فِى الْاَرْضِ حَيْرَانَ ۻ لَهٗٓ اَصْحٰبٌ يَّدْعُوْنَهٗٓ اِلَى الْهُدَى ائْتِنَا ؕ قُلْ
اِنَّ هُدَى اللّٰهِ هُوَ الْهُدٰى ؕ وَ اُمِرْنَا لِنُسْلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۷۱﴾ وَاَنْ
اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاتَّقُوْهُ ؕ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۷۲﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ
خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ ؕ وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ كُنْ فَيَكُوْنُ ؕ قَوْلُهُ
الْحَقُّ ؕ وَلَهُ الْمُلْكُ يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِى الصُّوْرِ ؕ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ؕ
وَهُوَ الْحَكِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿۷۳﴾

And when you see those who indulge in our verses adversely, turn away from them until they get busy with some other discourse. If Satan makes you forget, then, after the recollection, do not sit with the unjust people. [68] **And those who fear Allah bear no responsibility for anything they are accountable for, but only for advising them, so that they may fear Allah.** [69]

And avoid those who have taken their faith as game and play and the worldly life has deceived them, and preach with it (the Qur'an), lest one should be detained for what he earned, having none to help besides Allah, nor to intercede, and if he offers every ransom, it will not be accepted from him. They are those who are detained for what they earned. For them there is a drink of boiling water and a painful punishment, because they used to disbelieve. [70]

Say, "Should we call someone besides Allah, which can give neither benefit nor harm, and should we turn back on our heels after Allah has given us guidance, like the one whom the satans have taken away far into the wilderness leaving him bewildered; he has friends who call him to the right path (saying), "come to us." Say, "Allah's guidance is the guidance, and we have been ordered to submit to the Lord of the worlds, [71] **and establish Ṣalāh, and fear Him. And He is the One before whom you are to be gathered.** [72] **And He is the One who created the heavens and the earth in all rightness, and the day He says, "Be" and it comes to be. His word**

is the truth and His is the kingdom on the day the Horn shall be blown. He is the knower of the absent and the present, and He is Wise, All-Aware. [73]

Commentary

Avoid Gatherings of False People

In the present verses, Muslims have been instructed that they should, as a matter of principle, abstain from being a part of the gatherings frequented by those who prefer to follow the false - because a sin is a sin, whether you do it yourself or watch others doing it. Details follow.

The word: يَخُوضُونَ (translated here as 'indulge') in the first verse (68) is from: خَوْض (*khawḍ*) which basically means to enter into water and wade through it. Then, it also denotes entering into activities which are vain, absurd or futile. This word has been used in the Qur'ān usually in this very sense. Verses such as: وَكُنَّا نَخُوضُ مَعَ الْخَائِضِينَ 'we used to indulge (in vain discourse) with those indulging - 74:45' and: فِي خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ 'playing with what they are indulged in - 6:91' are some examples.

Therefore, the Qur'ānic expression referring to: خَوْض فِي الْآيَاتِ has been translated by Maulānā Ashraf Alī Thānavī and Shaykh al-Hind, Maulanā Maḥmūd al-Ḥasan in the sense of fault-finding and disputing, which means: 'when you see those people meddling in the Āyāt of Allah just for fun and ridicule, or trying to find faults in them, turn away from them.'

The address in this verse is general, to everyone - which includes the Holy Prophet ﷺ, and the members of his community as well. The truth of the matter is that the address to the Holy Prophet ﷺ is there only to let Muslims at large hear it, otherwise he never participated in any such gatherings even during his childhood days. Therefore, he needed no prohibition.

Then, 'turning away' from the gatherings of false people could take many forms. For example, leave the gathering or get busy doing something else while being there without paying any attention to them. But, at the end of the verse, it was made clear that the first form is what is desirable, that is, one should not keep sitting in their gathering; one should rise and leave from there.

Said at the end of the verse was 'if Satan makes you forget', that is, if one went into their gathering unmindfully - whether while not remembering the prohibition of participating in such gatherings, or while not recalling that these people talk against the *Āyāt* of Allah and the *Rasūl* of Allah in their gatherings - then, in either situation, once it is remembered, one should leave that gathering immediately. To keep sitting there after having remembered is a sin. The same subject appears in another verse where, at the end, it has been said: If you kept sitting there, you will be like them (إِنَّكُمْ إِذًا مِّثْلُهُمْ : 4:140).

In *Tafsīr* Kabir, Imām al-Rāzī has said that the real intent in this verse is to abstain from such sinful gatherings and their participants. The best course is to rise and depart from there. But, should leaving the gathering pose a danger to one's life, property or honour, it is permissible for common people to "turn away" in some other manner, for instance, they could make themselves busy with something else and pay no attention to them. But, the case is different with particular people who are followed in religious matters - for them, the only appropriate way is to rise and leave the gathering.

Going a little further in our understanding of the sentence: وَإِمَّا يُنسِيَنَّكَ الشَّيْطَٰنُ (And if Satan makes you forget) mentioned above, let us consider its implications. If this is addressed to Muslims at large, it is clear that to forget is human - and if the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ, the question arises: If forgetfulness comes to affect a prophet and messenger of Allah as well, how can their teachings be trusted?

The answer is: It is possible that prophets عليهم السلام too forget something under particular circumstances where the divine wisdom decides to make it so happen to achieve a particular purpose, but they are immediately alerted by Allah Ta'ālā through Waḥy which helps them not to let it last. Therefore, their teachings ultimately become free of any doubts of forgetfulness.

However, this sentence of the verse does tell us that should a person fall into an error inadvertently, that will stand forgiven. In a *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has been said:

رُفِعَ عَنْ أُمَّتِى الْخَطَأُ وَالنِّسْيَانُ وَمَا اسْتُكْرِهُوا عَلَيْهِ

Removed from my *Ummah* is (the sin of) error and forgetting

and that which one has been compelled to do.

In Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said:

> This verse tells that Muslims should abstain from every such gathering where things are being said against Allah Ta'ālā, His *Rasūl* صلى الله عليه وسلم and the Sharī'ah of Islam and where it is not within one's power and control to stop or have it stopped, or, at the least, be able to say what is true and right. However, participating in such a gathering with the intention to reform and to carry the message of truth to them does not matter.

As for the statement: فَلَا تَقْعُدْ بَعْدَ الذِّكْرٰى مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ which prohibits sitting with unjust people after the recollection, Imām al-Jassās has deduced the ruling that participating in the gathering of such unjust, irreligious and big-mouthed people is an absolute sin, whether or not, at that time, they are engaged in talking about what would be considered impermissible - because people of such nature could be expected to start their ridiculous rantings all of a sudden. This rule is deduced from this verse on the basis that sitting in the company of unjust people has been prohibited in this verse in an absolute sense. It does not have the condition that they be busy with their act of injustice at that time too.

The same subject has been taken up in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān more explicitly where it is said: وَلَا تَرْكَنُوْٓا اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا فَتَمَسَّكُمُ النَّارُ (And do not incline towards the wrong doers, lest the Fire should catch you ... 11:113).

When the verse cited above was revealed, the noble Companions submitted: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, if this absolute prohibition of going in their gatherings remained in force, we shall be deprived of offering Ṣalāh and *Ṭawāf* in *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* because these people keep sitting there all the time (before Hijrah and the Conquest of Makkah) doing nothing but fault-finding and ill-speaking. Thereupon, revealed was the next verse (69): وَمَا عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ يَتَّقُوْنَ مِنْ حِسَابِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ وَّلٰكِنْ ذِكْرٰى لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُوْنَ It means when people who observe restraint go to *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* for their own rightful purpose, then, they are not responsible for the evil deeds of those wicked people present there. However, it does remain their duty that they should tell them what is right and true which may per-

haps help them take the right path.

In the third verse (70), nearly the same subject has been stressed upon in the following words: وَذَرِ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا دِينَهُمْ لَعِبًا وَّلَهْوًا (And avoid those who have taken their faith as game and play ...). The word: ذر (*dhar*) here is a derivation from: وذر (*wadhara*) which means being displeased with something and leaving it. Thus, the verse can be taken either in the sense of leaving people who have turned the true religion, that is, Islam which has been sent for them, into a plaything and a laughing stock; or in the sense that they have left their real faith and taken to fun and play as their very own religion and purpose of life. The outcome of both meanings is nearly the same.

After that, it was said: وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا that is, the transitory life of the present world has deceived them. This is a true diagnosis of their real problem. They are so disobedient and wicked because they are bewitched by the glamour of their mortal life totally forgetting that they have another state of life ahead of them. If they had believed in the *'Ākhirah* (Hereafter) and *Qiyāmah* (The Last Day), they would have never acted so recklessly.

In this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and Muslims at large have been given two orders that they should not only avoid the people identified, but that they should also act positively and continue preaching through the Qur'ān and keep putting the fear of Allah's punishment in their hearts.

The detail of this punishment was pointed out at the end of the verse by saying that, should they continue doing what they were doing, they are bound to fall a victim to their own evil conduct. The word used at this place is: تُبْسَلَ which means to be detained or be entrapped.

Since man in this world is accustomed to rely on three kinds of sources to escape the punishment of his own error or injustice inflicted on someone. When convenient, he would use the power and influence of his party or group to stay safe against the consequences of his injustice. Then, should he become helpless, he would use recommendations from the influencial people. When that too does not work, he would try to secure his freedom from punishment by spending money.

Allah Ta'ālā says in this verse that His criminal cannot be saved

from punishment by any friend or relative, nor can an intercession by anyone succeed without the permission of Allah, nor can wealth of any kind be accepted - even if the criminal were to possess the wealth of the whole world and wished to give it all in exchange for his freedom from punishment, even then this *fidyah* will not be accepted from him.

Finally, at the close of the verse, it was said: أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ أُبْسِلُوا بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَهُمْ شَرَابٌ مِّنْ حَمِيمٍ وَعَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْفُرُونَ that is, these are the people who have been detained in the punishment of their evil deeds. They will have boiling water to drink in the *Jahannam* about which it has been said in another verse that it will shatter their entrails apart (47:15) and that there will be painful punishments other than that of the boiling water in return for their disbelief and denial.

This verse also tells us that the very company of people who are heedless to the *'Ākhirah* and are content with their life in the mortal world is fatal for everyone. Its ultimate consequence is that whoever sits in their company shall be subject to the same punishment in which they have been caught up.

The essential objective in these three verses (68-70) is to save Muslims from evil environment and bad company which can be as deadly as poison. Many clear, definite and conclusive statements (*Nuṣūṣ*) of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth as well as repeated observation and experience prove that the root of all evils and crimes in which human beings get involved is the evil society and environment in which they grow up. Once snared into it, one slides into evils against personal grain and conscience. Then, comes the stage when, once habituated, the sense of evil dies away - reaching the limit when one starts taking evil as good and good as evil. In a *Ḥadīth*, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: When a person gets involved in a sin for the first time, there appears a dot on his heart. This is like a black dot on a white dress which everyone dislikes and gets disturbed with. So, this person too feels the distaste in his heart. But when he, after having done the first one, goes on doing the second and the third sin - and does not repent from the past sin - black dots, one after the other, keep appearing on the heart, so much so that the radiant tablet of the heart turns jet black. The outcome is that this person is deprived of the very ability to distinguish between good and bad. The Holy Qur'ān identifies it

with the word: "*ra'n*" (rust, stain) when it says: كَلَّا بَلْ رَانَ عَلٰى قُلُوبِهِم مَّا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ (83:14), that is, there is rust on their hearts because of their evil deeds (which has taken away their ability to receive good).

When you come to think of it, wrong environment and bad company really hurt all human beings. They push people into the abyss. May Allah keep all of us protected from them. Therefore, everyone who is responsible for raising children must do their best to keep children safe from such society and environment.

As for the next three verses (71-73), they too deal with the refutation of *Shirk* (the attribution of partners to Allah) and the affirmation of *Tauhid* (the Oneness of Allah) and *'Ākhirah* (the Hereafter, the life to come) as fairly evident from the translation itself.

Verses 74 - 81

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرٰهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ ءَازَرَ أَتَتَّخِذُ أَصْنَامًا ءَالِهَةً ۖ إِنِّىٓ أَرٰىكَ
وَقَوْمَكَ فِى ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَكَذٰلِكَ نُرِىٓ إِبْرٰهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُوقِنِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾ فَلَمَّا جَنَّ
عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَءَا كَوْكَبًا ۖ قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّى ۖ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَ قَالَ لَآ أُحِبُّ
الْأٰفِلِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾ فَلَمَّا رَءَا الْقَمَرَ بَازِغًا قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّى ۖ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَ
قَالَ لَئِن لَّمْ يَهْدِنِى رَبِّى لَأَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الضَّآلِّينَ ﴿٧٧﴾
فَلَمَّا رَءَا الشَّمْسَ بَازِغَةً قَالَ هٰذَا رَبِّى هٰذَآ أَكْبَرُ ۖ فَلَمَّآ أَفَلَتْ
قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ إِنِّى بَرِىٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ إِنِّى وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِىَ
لِلَّذِى فَطَرَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَّمَآ أَنَا۠ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ
﴿٧٩﴾ وَحَآجَّهُۥ قَوْمُهُۥ ۚ قَالَ أَتُحَآجُّوٓنِّى فِى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدٰىنِ ۚ وَلَآ
أَخَافُ مَا تُشْرِكُونَ بِهِۦٓ إِلَّآ أَن يَشَآءَ رَبِّى شَيْـًٔا ۗ وَسِعَ رَبِّى كُلَّ
شَىْءٍ عِلْمًا ۗ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَكَيْفَ أَخَافُ مَآ أَشْرَكْتُمْ وَلَا
تَخَافُونَ أَنَّكُمْ أَشْرَكْتُم بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِۦ عَلَيْكُمْ سُلْطٰنًا ۚ

فَاَیُّ الْفَرِیْقَیْنِ اَحَقُّ بِالْاَمْنِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾

And (remember) when Ibrāhīm said to his father, Āzar: "Do you (really) take idols as gods? I am afraid you and your people are in open error." [74] **And thus We showed Ibrāhīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, so that he may be firm in belief.** [75]

So, when the night enveloped him, he saw a star. He said, "This is my Lord." But, when it vanished, he said, "I do not like those who vanish." [76] **Later, when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my Lord." But, when it vanished, he said, "If my Lord does not guide me, I shall be among those gone astray."** [77] **Thereafter, when he saw the sun rising, he said, "This is my Lord. This is greater." Again, when it vanished, he said, "O my people, I am free of whatever you associate with Allah.** [78] **I have, indeed, turned my face straight towards the One who created the heavens and the earth, and I am not one of those who associate partners with Allah."** [79]

And his people argued with him. He said, "Do you argue with me about Allah while He has already led me to the right path, and I do not fear what you associate with Him unless, of course, something is willed by my Lord? My Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. Would you, then, take no lesson? [80] **And how can I fear what you associate with Him, while you do not fear that you have associated with Allah something for which He has sent down no authority to you? Now, which of the two parties has more right to be in peace? (Tell me) if you know."** [81]

Commentary

Previous verses contained a description of the call given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in which he addressed the disbelievers of Arabia and appealed to them that they should forsake the worship of idols and believe in a single object of worship: Allah.

The present verses support this call of truth in a particular way which could be naturally acceptable to the people of Arabia who have Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام as their patriarch and the whole Arabia

stood united in paying homage to him almost always. These verses refer to the debate against the worship of idols and stars led by him before his people and to whom he had then given a lesson as to what a true belief in the Oneness of Allah should be.

The first verse (74) opens with Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام telling his father, 'Āzar that he had taken idols made with his own hands as his object of worship, and that he saw him and his entire people in manifest error.

It is commonly held that 'Āzar is the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's father while most historians give his name as *Tarakh* and identify 'Āzar as his title. Imām al-Rāzī and a group of early scholars hold that *Tarakh* was the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's father and 'Āzar was the name of his uncle. After becoming a minister of Nimrūd, his uncle, 'Āzar had become a polytheist. Since calling an uncle as father is common in Arab usage, 'Āzar has been named here as Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm's father. In Sharh al-Mawāhib, Zarqānī has reported several proofs to this effect.

Reform Begins at Home

'Āzar, whether a father or uncle of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm, was a respectable elder of the family. Thus, it was from his home that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm gave the first call to truth - as was commanded the Holy Prophet ﷺ too: وَأَنْذِرْ عَشِيْرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِيْنَ (26:214) that is, warn your near relatives (of the Divine punishment). It was in obedience to this command that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم had first gathered his own family to hear him when he stood at the hill of *Ṣafā* to deliver his call of truth.

According to *Tafsīr* Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ, from here we also learn that inviting a respected elder of the family, who may not be on the right path of faith, to the right path is not contrary to the norms of reverence. In fact, it is a matter of wishing well for him. In addition to that, this also tells us that starting the work of *da'wah*, the mission of inviting people to the true faith and the seeking of reforms that lead to it, from one's home, family and immediate circle, is a *Sunnah* (way) of the prophets عليهم السلام.

Two-Nation Theory: Believers are One People - Disbelievers, another.

It will be noted that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has elected not to

identify his family and his people with himself in this verse when he said to his father that 'his' people were in error. This indicates the great sacrifice Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm offered in the way of Allah by cutting off his bonds with his disbelieving brotherhood. Thus, by his deed, he demonstrated that Muslim nationality is founded through the bonds of Islam. When nationalities based on concepts of race or homeland clash against it, all these deserve to be forsaken.

By mentioning this event relating to Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, the Holy Qur'ān has asked all communities to come after him that they too should follow in his footsteps. It was said: قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗٓ اِذْ قَالُوْا لِقَوْمِهِمْ اِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ It means: Definitely good and worthy of being emulated and followed by the Muslim community is the way and conduct of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and of those with him who frankly told their lineal, racial and geographical brotherhood that they were wary of them and their false objects of worship and that the wall of discord between them shall remain standing until such time that they do become believers and submit to none but Allah.

This tells us that the two-nation theory which brought Pakistan into existence - was first proclaimed by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The *Ummah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and other communities, followed this guidance and moved ahead. Among Muslims, Islam as the identity of their nationhood became well-recognized. During his journey undertaken to perform his Last Hajj, the Holy Prophet ﷺ met a caravan on the way. He asked them: 'Which nationality do you come from?' They replied: 'نَحْنُ قَوْمٌ مُّسْلِمُوْنَ' (al-Bukhari) (We are [a] nation [of] Muslims). Here, in accordance with the early practice in Arabia, they did not name a tribe or a lineally identified family, instead, called themselves: '*muslimūn*' (Muslims) - and by doing so, they declared what was their real nationality, a nationality which will hold good in all time frames right to the end of time well through the trials of the *Ākhirah*. At this particular place when Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام addressed his father, he proclaimed his distaste for the doings of 'his' people - attributing the people he came from to his father - but, at the place where he had to proclaim his principled disassociation from the same people, he addressed them as his, as appears in the next verse: يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ (O my people, I am free of what you associate with Al-

lah). The hint given here is: 'Though, you are my people in terms of race and homeland, but your deeds of disbelief and polytheism have compelled me to cut off my relations with your brotherhood.'

The brotherhood of Sayyidna Ibrahim and his father were involved in a two-fold *Shirk*: They worshipped idols as well as stars. So, Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام debated both issues with his father and with his people.

First, it was idol worship. He said that it was error, and straying. Then, in the next verses, he pointed out to stars as unworthy of worship. And a little earlier in verse 75, it is in the form of an introduction that Allah Ta'ala mentions a particular elegance and insight of Sayyidna Ibrahim عليه السلام by saying: وَكَذٰلِكَ نُرِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ مَلَكُوْتَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلِيَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُوْقِنِيْنَ that is, 'We made Ibrahim عليه السلام see what We have created in the heavens and the earth in a way which would unravel the reality of all these created objects manifestly so that he may become firm in his belief.' What came to pass after that has taken the shape of a wondrous dialogue that appears in later verses (which shows a certain quality even in the translated form of the meanings of the totally untranslatable beauty, diction and elan of the original) and it would be useful to dwell upon the manner in which it emerges stage by stage.

Using Wisdom and Strategy in *Tabligh* and *Da'wah* is the Way of Prophets

Let us begin with verse 76 which opens with the words: فَلَمَّا جَنَّ عَلَيْهِ الَّيْلُ رَاٰ كَوْكَبًا So, when the night enveloped him, he saw a star. Then, beaming at his people, he said: This is my Lord. The sense in which he said it was: Is it not, as you think and believe, my Lord and your Lord, the *Rabb* of both of us who nurtures, nourishes and sustains us? In a little while you will find out how real that is. Then, after some time, the star vanished. This gave Sayyidna Ibrahim a good occasion to drive his argument home against his disbelieving people. He said: لَآ اُحِبُّ الْاٰفِلِيْنَ (I do not like those who vanish). The word: اٰفِلِيْنَ ('afulin') is from: افول ('afulin) which means to set.

The sense is that things which set or vanish do not deserve being held dear - and when something is to be given the status of an object of worship has to be, quite obviously, most worthy of love and reverence. Maulana Rumi, in one of his couplets, has directly referred to this

event when he said (in Persian, with its stylized translation) :

خلیل آسادرِ ملکِ یقیں زن

نوائے لاَ اُحبُّ الآ فِلِیْنِ زن

Like Khalīl [Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh ...]

Enter

The Domain of Belief

By proclaiming

The Password:

I do not like the vanishing!

After that, some other night, with a glowing moon in sight, he again beamed his dialogue at his people following the earlier method, and said: (according to your view) this is my Lord but its reality you will find out after a little while. So, when the moon vanished, he said: If my Rabb had not been guiding me all along, I would have been enlisted among the stray like you, and it would have been the moon itself I might have taken as my Lord and my object of worship. But, the alternating conditions of its rising and setting brought me to the chastening conclusion that this star too is not worthy of worship.

Also hinted in this verse is that the *Rabb* or Lord of Ibrāhīm علیه السلام is a totally different entity from Whom guidance keeps coming to him.

Then, the day he saw the sun rising, he again said to his people as he had done earlier: This (according to your view) is my *Rabb*. And this is the biggest of all. But, its reality you will soon find out. So, when came the time for the sun to set, set it did. Driven home was his final argument against the ideas of his people. The reality had become all too obvious. So, he said: يٰقَوْمِ اِنِّىْ بَرِىْٓءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُوْنَ (O my people, I am free of whatever you associate with Allah).

In conclusion, he made it clear before them that his *Rabb* (the Lord of life who nurtures, cherishes and sustains it) and their *Rabb* can never be any of these created heavenly bodies which are not free of dependence on something else for their existence, and are surrounded by constant and ongoing changes of rising and setting. Instead of them, his Lord and their Lord was no other than the One who has created the heavens and the earth and everything therein. Therefore, he declared that he had changed his orientation away from their self-

sculpted idols and away from the stars of their fancy which changed and alternated under creational compulsion, and it was to the total exclusion of all these, that he had turned to Allah alone, the One God who has no partners and associates with Him - (and when that was settled, he was different) so, he made it frank and clear that he was not a *Mushrik* (disbeliever or polytheist) like them. (Indeed, a line of demarcation drawn for ever!)

In this debate, it is significant that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has shown characteristic prophetic wisdom and elegance of approach when he does not make a frontal assault on the false notions of star-worship entertained by his people as being false or erroneous. He has, rather, chosen a very telling style of presentation which by itself would help any rational human being to absorb the point being made and be able to recognize reality at the end. Of course, when the case was that of idol-worship, his method was different - there, he had taken a hard line right from the start, and had told his father point-blank that he and his people had gone astray. The reason was that idol-worship was all too obvious an error, contrary to star-worship the error of which was not so obvious and pronounced.

Noteworthy here is the outcome of the argument against star-worship presented by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام before his people. He said that (a) things which are subject to change, (b) things which keep alternating in their conditions, and (c) things which in their movements are subservient to some other power can never become deserving of being taken as anyone's *Rabb* or Lord. In this argument, it was possible to seek help from all other conditions of the stars, such as their rising and their intermediary stage before their setting, when it could have been said that they were not independent in their movements and were moving in a pre-specified orbit under the command of someone else. But, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام, from out of all these states and conditions, chose the setting of these stars as the main thrust of his argument - because their setting, in a way, spells out their decline in the sight of common people. The typical argument presented by prophets, may peace be upon them all, is what would go on to influence the minds of common people. They do not pursue philosophical truisms, instead, they address people at the level of common

comprehension. Therefore, it was to prove the helplessness and ineffectiveness of stars that the phenomenon of their setting was presented. Otherwise, the rising of the stars might have also been used to prove that they were helpless and powerless - and it would have also been possible to get hold of an argument from changes that come upon them before they finally set.

Some Instructions for Preachers of Islam

This debating style of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام provides some important points of guidance for Muslim scholars and *Da'wah* workers:

1. In matters relating to carrying the call of truth to people (*Tablīgh*) and seeking reform among them (*Iṣlāḥ*), being universally rigid or universally lenient is not appropriate. The correct approach is to understand that each of these has an occasion and a limit. For example, Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm has used strong words when it comes to idol-worship, because its error is within common sight. But, he has not used such strong words in the case of star-worship where he has used a particular method to clarify its reality in the minds of his people - because the matter of stars and planets being helpless and powerless was not so readily obvious as was that of self-carved idols. This tells us that should common people be involved in an error of judgement or conduct, which they do not realize as such, then, the '*Ālim* (religious scholar) or *Muballigh* (religious preacher) would do well to avoid taking a hard line, rigid or excessive or dogmatic, and try to find a better way to remove their doubts.

2. The second guidance concerns the manner in which truth has to be presented. The example is that Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام did not address his people directly asking them to do what had to be done. Rather than say something in the mode of an order, he simply told them about how he felt in this matter. He said that he could not declare things which were helplessly involved in a cycle of rising and setting as objects of worship. For this reason, he told them, he had turned to the Being that is the creator, nurturer and caretaker of all these things. Of course, the purpose was to bring them round to do the same. But, in his wise way, he abstained from a direct address lest they become totally uncompromising by opposing the suggestion just for the sake of opposition. This tells us that the job of a reformer and

preacher is not to go ahead and tell what is true in just about any way. Instead of doing something like that, he is bound to say it in a manner which would produce the desired effect on his listeners.

Verses 82 - 89

الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوْٓا اِيْمَانَهُمْ بِظُلْمٍ اُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الْاَمْنُ وَهُمْ
مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾ وَتِلْكَ حُجَّتُنَآ اٰتَيْنٰهَآ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ عَلٰى قَوْمِهٖ ؕ نَرْفَعُ
دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَ وَهَبْنَا لَهٗٓ
اِسْحٰقَ وَيَعْقُوْبَ ؕ كُلًّا هَدَيْنَا ۚ وَنُوْحًا هَدَيْنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ
ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ دَاوٗدَ وَسُلَيْمٰنَ وَاَيُّوْبَ وَ يُوْسُفَ وَ مُوْسٰى وَ هٰرُوْنَ ؕ
وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَزَكَرِيَّا وَ يَحْيٰى وَ عِيْسٰى وَ
اِلْيَاسَ ؕ كُلٌّ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ وَاِسْمٰعِيْلَ وَ الْيَسَعَ وَيُوْنُسَ
وَلُوْطًا ؕ وَكُلًّا فَضَّلْنَا عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَمِنْ اٰبَآئِهِمْ
وَذُرِّيّٰتِهِمْ وَاِخْوَانِهِمْ ۚ وَاجْتَبَيْنٰهُمْ وَهَدَيْنٰهُمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ
﴿٨٧﴾ ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهٖ ؕ وَلَوْ
اَشْرَكُوْا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ
اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحُكْمَ وَالنُّبُوَّةَ ۚ فَاِنْ يَّكْفُرْ بِهَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ فَقَدْ
وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوْا بِهَا بِكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٩﴾

Those who have believed and have not mixed their faith with injustice; it is they who deserve peace and it is they who are on the right path. [82]

And that is the proof from Us We gave to Ibrahim against his people. We raise in ranks whom We will. Surely, your Lord is Wise, Knowing. [83]

And We blessed Isḥaq* and Ya'qūb. To each We gave guidance. And earlier, We gave guidance to Nūḥ and, of

*. Biblical names in the order as they appear in this paragraph containing Verses 84-86: Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zechariah, John, Jesus, Elias, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah and Lot.

his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān and Ayyūb and Yūsuf and Mūsā and Hārūn - and this is how We reward the good in deed [84] **- and to Zakariyya and Yaḥyā and 'Īsā and Ilyas - each one of them was of the righteous** [85] **- and to Ismā'īl and Yasa' and Yūnus and Lūṭ, and all of them We made to excel over the worlds.** [86] **And We gave guidance to many among their fathers and their children and their brothers, and We chose them and led them on to the straight path.** [87]

That is Allah's guidance. He guides with it whom He wills from His slaves. And had they associated partners with Him, all they did would have been nullified for them. [88]

They are those whom We have given the Book and wisdom and prophethood. So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it. [89]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was the debate Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had held with his father, 'Āzar, and with his entire Nimrudic people. There, after having conclusively refuted their worship of idols and stars, he had addressed his people by telling them in effect: You threaten me that your idols will destroy me if I refuse to accept their authority, although these idols do not have the power to do so, nor have I done anything as a result of which I may be hit by some hardship. In fact, it is you who should be trembling in fear for you have committed a crime as terrible as equating with Him the creations of Allah, rather the objects made and prepared by His creation even giving them a share in His divinity. Then, the fact that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Knowing, All-Aware and All-Powerful is not hidden from any sensible person. This calls for some thinking on your part. So, think and say who deserves to be in peace and who it is who should be fearing?

In the first (82) of the present verses, it was said that only those who believe in Allah and then do not go on to mix up their faith with injustice shall be the people who can hope to be safe against punishment. It appears in *Ḥadīth*, when this verse was revealed, the noble *Ṣaḥābah* were frightened. They said: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, who among us has not been unjust to himself by committing one or the other sin?

Now, in this verse, the only condition of remaining safe from punishment is that one should have done no injustice to himself while in the state of *Īmān*. If so, how can we ever achieve salvation? The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: You have not understood the correct meaning of the verse. Here, '*Ẓulm*' (injustice) means '*Shirk*' (ascribing of partners to Allah) as said in another verse: إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ (Joining others in the worship of Allah is a great injustice - 31:13). Therefore, the sense of the verse is that one, who enters (the bliss of) *Īmān* and then does not associate anyone with the Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, shall remain safe from punishment, and considered well-guided.

In brief, those who worship idols, rocks, trees, rivers and stars do so because they, out of bland simplicity, take them to be the holders and wielders of power. So, they are scared of the idea of forsaking their worship lest these objects were to hurt them in some way. Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام gave such people a smart key to their problem when he asked them to fear Almighty Allah who knew all they do and had power over whatever good or bad reaches them - and not commit the folly of fearing things which have neither knowledge nor power. This fear is absolutely unreasonable. One must fear Allah alone - and whoever believes in it is out of all danger.

Said in this verse is: وَلَمْ يَلْبِسُوٓا إِيمَانَهُم بِظُلْمٍ (And those who have not mixed their faith with injustice). Here, '*Ẓulm*' as explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, means *Shirk* (ascribing partners in the divinity of Allah) - not sin in an ordinary sense. But, by bringing in: بظلم (*bi ẓulmin*) as indefinite noun (*Nakirah*), a device supported by the rules of the Arabic grammar, the sense was made general which includes all kinds of *Shirk*. As for the word: لَمْ يَلْبِسُوٓا (*lam yalbisu*), it has been derived from: لبس (*labasa*) which means to wear, cover or mix. Thus, the verse comes to mean that a person who mixes some sort of *Shirk* in his or her *Īmān*, that is, one who, despite believing in Allah Ta'ālā along with all His attributes of perfection, takes non-Allah too as bearing some of those attributes, shall be considered excluded from the guarantee of peace and faith given here.

We also come to know from this verse that *Shirk* is not restricted to becoming a *Mushrik* or idolater. In fact, also *Mushrik* is a person who

does not worship idols in the customary sense, but recites the *Kalimah* of Islam, yet takes some angel or messenger or *waliy* or 'saint'of Allah as partners or sharers in some exclusive attributes of Allah. This verse carries a stern warning for those who take the *Auliā'* of Allah (The Men of Allah) and their *Mazārs* (resting places, tombs) as capable of answering their prayers and granting their needs, and go as far as believing practically as if the Divine powers have been delegated to them. Refuge with Allah!

In the second verse (83), Allah Ta'ālā has said that the truimph of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm in his debate against his people and in which he had silenced them was a blessing of Allah alone for He gave him a sound theory to propound and glowing arguments to employ. Let no one wax proud about his or her intelligence and understanding or art of discourse and power of oration as self-sufficient. Nothing crosses the barrier of possibility without the support and help of Allah Ta'ālā. Bland human reason is not enough to comprehend realities. This is a matter of common observation in every age. Philosophers of great standing go astray while many among the illiterate get a firm hold on correct belief and right thinking. Maulanā Rūmī was on the beam when he said:

بے عنایاتِ حق و خاصانِ حق
گر مَلَك باشد سیه ہستش ورق

Without the graces of The True One and those close to Him
Dark shall be the record of deeds, even if one be an angel.

By saying: نَرْفَعُ دَرَجٰتٍ مَّنْ نَّشَآءُ (We raise in ranks whom We will) towards the end of the verse (83), the hint given is that the station of special reverence received by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام in this world which would last through generations to come until the Last Day, a homage universally paid by Jews, Christians, Muslims and Buddhists, was no feat of personal acquisition or recognition, instead of which, this was nothing but the grace and reward from Allah.

In the six verses (84-89) appearing after that, there is a list of seventeen blessed prophets, some of whom are the forefathers of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm علیہ السلام while most are his progeny, with some being his brothers or nephews. On the one hand, described in these verses is their being Divinely guided, righteous in conduct and firm on the straight

path, along with the fact that Allah Ta'ālā has chosen and blessed them to serve His religion. On the other hand, it has been stressed that, in return for the sacrifice of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام who had disassociated himself from his father, community and country in the way of Allah, was it not that, much before the reward of eternal bliss in the Hereafter, Allah Ta'ālā bestowed on him right here in this world too a community better than his own, a country better than his own - and blessed him with the supreme distinction that all prophets and messengers sent into the world after him upto the end of time were from among his progeny? A branch that originated from Sayyidnā Isḥāq عليه السلام had prophets who appeared among the Banī Isrā'īl. The other branch which originated from Sayyidnā Ismā'īl عليه السلام saw the coming of the foremost and the Last among prophets, Sayyidnā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم from among them. They all were the progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. This phenomena also tells us that, though honour and salvation or disgrace and punishment really depend on one's personal deeds, but having a prophet or man of Allah (*waliy*) among forefathers, or having observing *'Ālims* of *Dīn* and men and women of righteous conduct among children, is also a great blessing as this too brings its benefits.

Out of these seventeen prophets عليهم السلام identified in the cited verses, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is the patriarch of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. The rest have been called their progeny: وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِهٖ دَاوٗدَ وَ سُلَيْمٰنَ (and, of his progeny, to Dāwūd and Sulaymān ...). This poses two difficulties. The first could be about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام who, because of his father-less birth, is a progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام from the daughter's side, that is, not a paternal grandson, instead, is a grandson from the maternal side.

If so, how would calling him his progeny would be correct? Most learned Muslim scholars and jurists have answered it by saying that progeny is inclusive of both paternal and maternal grandsons. It is from here that they prove that Sayyidnā Hasan and Sayyidnā Husain رضى الله عنهما stand included under the progeny of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The second difficulty posed here relates to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام for he is not from among his children, but is a nephew. The answer is clear. In customary usage, referring to an uncle as father and to a

nephew as son is very common.

By mentioning the blessings of Allah on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام in these verses, two things have been made very clear. Firstly, there is the law for anyone who sacrifices whatever he holds dear in the way of Allah, on him or her Allah bestows right here in this mortal world what is better than what he or she has surrendered in the way of Allah. Secondly, the purpose is to make the disbelievers of Makkah hear this background of things in their situation so that they may be guided right. This amounts to telling them: You do not listen to what Our prophet, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā صلى الله عليه وسلم is telling you. If that is so, consider these you too rever as great. So, Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and his whole progeny have all been saying the same thing - that Allah is the only object worthy of worship. Associating anyone else with Him in *'Ibādah*, or suggesting that someone else is a sharer in His exclusive attributes is what disbelief and straying is. This proves that they are, even in terms of what they themselves accept as established truth, subject to censure.

The subject continues through the eighth verse (89) at the end of which it has been said to comfort the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم : فَإِنْ يَّكْفُرْبِهَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ فَقَدْ وَكَّلْنَا بِهَا قَوْمًا لَّيْسُوْا بِهَا بِكٰفِرِيْنَ (So, if these people disbelieve it, then, We have deputed for it a people who do not disbelieve in it). In other words, it means: If some of your addressees do not listen to you and are, despite having been told about the teachings of all past prophets, bent upon nothing short of denial, then, you do not have to worry - because We have appointed a great people who would say yes to your call, follow your word and make the mission their own, and who would never stoop to the level of disbelief and denial.

Included here are all *Muhājirīn* and *Anṣār* present during the blessed age of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and also all Muslims who keep coming upto the end of time until comes the *Qiyāmah*. And this verse is a fond asset for all such people, as Allah Ta'ālā has named them on an occasion which calls for praise by Him:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَاحْشُرْنَا فِيْ زُمْرَتِهِمْ

O Allah, make us one of them and raise us in their company.

Verses 90 - 94

أُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ هَدَى اللّٰهُ فَبِهُدٰىهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ ؕ قُلْ لَّآ اَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ
اَجْرًا ؕ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٰى لِلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٩٠﴾ وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللّٰهَ حَقَّ
قَدْرِهٖٓ اِذْ قَالُوْا مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى بَشَرٍ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ قُلْ مَنْ اَنْزَلَ
الْكِتٰبَ الَّذِيْ جَآءَ بِهٖ مُوْسٰى نُوْرًا وَّهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُوْنَهٗ
قَرَاطِيْسَ تُبْدُوْنَهَا وَتُخْفُوْنَ كَثِيْرًا ۚ وَعُلِّمْتُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنْتُمْ
وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ ؕ قُلِ اللّٰهُ ۙ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِيْ خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ ﴿٩١﴾
وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ
الْقُرٰى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَهُمْ
عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى
اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ قَالَ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ وَلَمْ يُوْحَ اِلَيْهِ شَيْءٌ وَّمَنْ قَالَ
سَاُنْزِلُ مِثْلَ مَآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ ؕ وَلَوْ تَرٰٓى اِذِ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ فِيْ غَمَرٰتِ
الْمَوْتِ وَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَاسِطُوْٓا اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۚ اَخْرِجُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ؕ اَلْيَوْمَ
تُجْزَوْنَ عَذَابَ الْهُوْنِ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ
وَكُنْتُمْ عَنْ اٰيٰتِهٖ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُوْنَا فُرَادٰى كَمَا
خَلَقْنٰكُمْ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَّتَرَكْتُمْ مَّا خَوَّلْنٰكُمْ وَرَآءَ ظُهُوْرِكُمْ ۚ وَمَا نَرٰى
مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَآءَكُمُ الَّذِيْنَ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّهُمْ فِيْكُمْ شُرَكٰٓؤُا ؕ لَقَدْ
تَّقَطَّعَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَّا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُوْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾

Those are the people Allah has guided. So, it is their guidance that you shall follow. Say, "I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds." [90]

And they did not hold Allah in due esteem when they said, "Allah has not sent down anything on a human being." Say, "Who has sent down the Book brought by

Mūsā as a light and a guidance for people, which you kept in sheets you displayed, and you concealed a lot? You were taught what you did not know - neither you nor your fathers?" Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in. [91]

And this is a blessed book We have sent down, confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it. And those who believe in the Hereafter believe in it, and of their prayers, they take due care. [92]

And who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah or says, "Revelation has been sent to me" whereas no revelation has been sent to him, and the one who says, "I would reveal just as Allah has revealed." And if you could witness when the unjust are in the throes of death, and the angels stretch their hands (and say,) "Out with your souls. Today, you shall have your punishment, a punishment of humiliation, because you have been saying about Allah what is not true, and rejecting His verses arrogantly." [93]

And you have come to Us all alone just as We had created you at first, and you have left behind what We had bestowed on you, and We do not see your intercessors with you - those whom you claimed to be (Our) partners in (managing) your matters. In fact, all ties between you are severed and all that you claimed is lost to you. [94]

Commentary

It will be recalled that mentioned in previous verses were great rewards and ranks bestowed on Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Through these, the purpose was to show to the whole progeny of Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام generally and to the people of Makkah and Arabia particularly, in a practically demonstrated form, that a person who takes total obedience to Allah Ta'ālā as the sole purpose of his or her life and sacrifices everything held dear in the way of Allah - as was done by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah, may Allah bless him - then, in order are the best of returns for that person. He left his father and mother, his people and country, all for the sake of Allah. Then, it was to offer his supreme services to found and raise the foundations of the House of

Allah, the venerated Baytullah, that he abandoned the greeneries of the country of Syria and travelled all the way to the deserts of Makkah. When ordered to leave his wife and infant son in the wilderness, he obeyed instantly. When commanded to sacrifice his first-born and very dear son, he demonstrated his readiness to obey it all the way to the ultimate limits of his choice and volition. For those obedient in that class and degree, the real reward shall come only after *Qiyāmah*, and in *Jannah* alone. But, Allah Ta'ālā blesses such people right here in this world too with ranks and riches which would put all ranks and riches of the entire world to shame.

Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام left his people for the sake of Allah - in return, he became the patriarch of prophets, most of whom were from among his progeny. He left his country of Syria and Iraq - in return, he was blessed with Baytullah (the House of Allah), al-Balad al-Amīn (the City of Trust) and Umm al-Qurā (the Mother of Cities) that is, Makkah. His own people tried to disgrace him - in return, he was made the supreme leader of generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* in the present world where nations and religions despite their major mutual differences have all along remained united on paying homage to the reverence of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام.

It will also be recalled that in those verses seventeen prophets were mentioned most of whom are either children or progeny of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. It was also stated there that they were persons of great status whom Allah had chosen to convey His message to all human beings and that it was He who had shown them the straight path.

Explanatory Notes on the Present Verses

Addressing the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in the first verse (90) the people of Makkah have been sounded that the forefathers of a people cannot be taken as objects of emulation or role-models deserving of being followed to the letter in all their words and deeds, as was generally believed by the people of Arabia, and by the people of Makkah particularly. Instead, before going ahead and starting to follow someone, it is necessary to find out whether or not the person, or people, being followed, is himself on the path of true guidance. Therefore, after enu-

merating a brief list of the blessed prophets, it was said: أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ (Those are the people Allah has guided). After that, it was said: فَبِهُدَاهُمُ اقْتَدِهْ (So, it is their guidance that you shall follow).

Thus, the guidance given in this verse is bi-polar. The first element is addressed to the people of Arabia, and to the whole Muslim *Ummah* by implication, that is, they should forsake the superstition of following forefathers and take to following prophets guided by Allah Ta'ālā. The second element of guidance is for the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself, that is, he too should act in the way the past prophets have acted.

Noteworthy here is the fact that partial or subsidiary differences have been there in the laws of earlier prophets, may peace be upon them. Then, revealed for the Muslim peoples themselves, there have been many injunctions different from them. What, then, would be the meaning of asking the Holy Prophet ﷺ to follow the way of the past prophets and act in accordance with it? Keeping in view other Qur'ānic verses and narrations of *Ḥadīth*, the answer is that the command here does not apply to the following of the way of past prophets in all partial and subsidiary aspects of injunctions. In fact, the purpose is to adhere to the basic principles of religion which include *Tauhīd* (Oneness of Allah) *Risālah* (Prophethood) and *Ākhirah* (Hereafter) as has been their way. They never changed in the law of any prophet. From Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام to the Last of the Prophets ﷺ, all prophets, عليهم السلام, have been adhering to one Belief and one Way. As for subsidiary injunctions which remained unchanged, the *modus operandi* has been common. However, when a new injunction was given due to exigency of time or dictate of wisdom, it was acted upon as required.

This is the reason why it was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet ﷺ that he would - until such time that he received particular guidance through revelation - act in accordance with the way of past prophets عليهم السلام (Maẓharī & others).

After that, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been specially commanded to proclaim – a common practice of all past prophets – in the words which follow: قُلْ لَّا أَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا ذِكْرَىٰ لِلْعَٰلَمِينَ (Say: "I ask you no reward for it. It is nothing but an advice for all the worlds). In other words, it means: I am not asking you to pay for the good counsel I am offering to help you better your life. I need no fees or wages or re-

wards. If you accept it, I gain nothing. If you do not accept it, I lose nothing. This is only a message, a message for people all over, a message of good counsel, good will. Not accepting any return for teaching and preaching has been the common legacy of all prophets عليهم السلام. This is a powerful factor which goes on to make *Tablīgh* (conveying the message of religion to others) effective.

The second verse (91) has been revealed in answer to those who had the audacity to say that Allah Ta'ālā has just not revealed any book to any human being. According to them, this whole proposition of books and messengers was all wrong.

If, those who said that are the idolaters of Makkah, as mentioned by Ibn Kathīr, then, the matter is obvious, for they did not believe in any book and prophet. And if they were Jews, as held by other commentators - and the contextual elements of the verse obviously support this view - then, their saying so was an outcome of their anger and irritation, something contrary to the dictates of their own religion. According to a narration of Imām al-Baghawī, this was the reason why the Jews too were displeased with the person who had made this unfortunate remark, and it was because of this erroneous conduct of his that he was removed from his office of religious authority.

In this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ that people who made this absurd remark did not recognize the Most True Allah as was His right to be recognized. Had they done that, this audacious remark would have never escaped their lips. Then, Allah Ta'ālā tells the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to ask the people who deny Scriptures absolutely: If that is what you think - that Allah Ta'ālā did not reveal any book to any human being - then, you better have an answer as to who revealed the Torah, in which you too believe, and because of which you sit in judgement over your people. Along with it, they were also told: You are such connoisseurs of crooked ways that you would treat your own book, the Torah, which you believe in as being Holy Scripture, in a way that you got it conveniently written on separate sheets, rather than having it in a formally bound book, so that you can take out any sheet from it as and when you want it, and by doing so you would have the option of denying what it enjoined. An example of this are the verses of the Torah which described the signs and attrib-

utes of the Messenger of Allah which you have excluded. The last sentence of the verse: تَجْعَلُوْنَهٗ قَرَاطِيْسَ (which you kept in sheets) means exactly this. The word: قراطيس (*qarāṭis*) is the plural of: قِرْطَاس (*qirṭās*) which means sheet or paper.

After that, addressing the same people, it has been said: وَعُلِّمْتُمْ مَّا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنْتُمْ وَلَآ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ that is, you were taught (through the Qur'ān) what you or your forefathers did not know (earlier, either through the Torah or the Injīl).

At the end of verse (91), it was said: قُلِ اللّٰهُ ثُمَّ ذَرْهُمْ فِیْ خَوْضِهِمْ يَلْعَبُوْنَ (Say, "Allah." Then leave them playing with what they are indulged in). In other words, the sense is: As for the question - if Allah just did not send any book, who sent the Torah? - it was something they would not know how to answer, so, you go ahead and tell them that it was revealed by none but Allah. Now that the argument against them stands concluded, your mission as far as they are concerned is over. So, let them be lost in the game they are playing.

After having concluded the argument concerning Books revealed by Allah Ta'ālā against deniers, it was said in the third verse (92): وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ مُّصَدِّقُ الَّذِیْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَلِتُنْذِرَ اُمَّ الْقُرٰی وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا (And this is a blessed Book We have sent down confirming what has been before it, so that you may warn the town which is the mother of all towns, and those around it), that is, as it is that they too accept that the Torah was sent down by Allah Ta'ālā, so it is that We have sent down this Qur'ān too, and sufficient for them is the proof of its veracity that the Qur'ān confirms what has been revealed in the Torah and the Injīl. And that it was revealed after the Torah and Injīl is because these two Books were sent for the Banī Isrā'īl while for their other branch of Banī Ismā'īl, known as Arabs living in Umm al-Qurā, that is, Makkah and its environs, there has been no prophet or book of guidance until that time. Now this Qur'ān has been sent for them particularly, and for the whole world generally. Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah has been called Umm al-Qura by the Holy Qur'ān. It means the root and foundation of all towns and habitations. The reason is that, according to historical narratives, the land mass of the earth first began appearing from here. In addition to that, this is the Qiblah, and the central attraction of all acts of *'Ibādah* for the whole world. (Maẓharī) Said with: اُمَّ الْقُرٰی (Umm al-

Qurā) is: وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا (and those around it). It means all environs of Makkah, which includes the whole world East, West, North and South of Makkah.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَالَّذِيْنَ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِهٖ وَهُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ It means: Those who believe in the *'Ākhirah* (Hereafter) also believe in the Qur'ān and are particularly careful about their prayers (Ṣalāh). This carries an admonition for the Jews and disbelievers against their common ailment whereby they would, with typical lack of concern, accept what they liked and reject what they did not, opening a front against it. This is an effect of that ailment - that they do not believe in *'Ākhirah*. Anyone who believes in *'Ākhirah* and in a Day of Judgement will definitely be moved by the fear of Allah which would help him or her reason it out, and once convinced, one would bypass constraints of ignorant customs and embrace what is the truth.

A little thought would reveal that the lack of concern for the *'Ākhirah* is the mother of all spiritual diseases. From here come *Kufr* and *Shirk* and sin and disobedience. If a believer in the *'Ākhirah* happens to have committed a mistake or sin, he does feel a pinch in his heart. Sooner or later, he repents and resolves to stay away from sin in the future. So, the fear of Allah and the concern for the *'Ākhirah* are, in all truth, channels which make human beings what they should be and which make them capable of staying away from crime and sin and disobedience by conscious choice. Therefore, no Sūrah (Chapter) of the Qur'ān, perhaps no *Rukū'* (Section) either, is left without a reminder of this concern for the *'Ākhirah*:

اَللّٰهُمَّ اجْعَلْ جُمْلَةَ هُمُوْمِنَا هَمًّا وَّاحِدًا هَمَّ الْاٰخِرَةِ

O Allah, make all our concerns a single concern - the concern for *'Ākhirah*.

Verses 95 - 98

إِنَّ اللّٰهَ فَالِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوٰى ۖ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ
الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ ۚ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ فَأَنّٰى تُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٩٥﴾ فَالِقُ
الْإِصْبَاحِ ۚ وَجَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا وَّالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا ۚ ذٰلِكَ

تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُوْمَ
لِتَهْتَدُوْا بِهَا فِيْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ ؕ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ
وَّمُسْتَوْدَعٌ ؕ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٩٨﴾

Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit. He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living. That is Allah! Whereto, then, are you straying away? [95]

(He is) the One who causes the dawn to break. And He has made the night for rest and the sun and the moon for measurement. This is a measure set by (Allah) the Mighty, the Knowing. [96]

And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in darknesses of the land and the sea. We have elaborated the signs for people who know. [97]

And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell and a place to sojourn. We have elaborated the signs for people who understand. [98]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how obstinate and unmindful of consequences the disbelievers and ploytheists were. Since such evils are caused when people remain unaware of Allah and His unmatched knowledge and power, the present four verses provide the antidote. Here, Allah Ta'ālā cites some samples of His Knowledge and Power, and of blessings and favours bestowed on human beings, a little reflection in which would make every sensible person admit that feats of such magnitude cannot be accomplished by any power other than that of Almighty Allah.

In the first verse (95), it was said: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ فٰلِقُ الْحَبِّ وَالنَّوٰى (Surely, Allah is the one who splits the seed and the pit). Pointed to here is a marvel of creation. Splitting a dry seed and pit and bringing out from it a living green tree is the act of that Most Sacred Being who is the Creator of

the Universe. Human input has nothing to do with it. The most a farmer can do is to remove impediments or things harmful away from the growth path of the tender bud or shoot rising from inside the seed or pit, a tribute to the great power of the Creator. Of course, there are processes of ploughing, cleaning, softening, leveling, fertilizing and watering of land - but, the maximum these efforts can achieve is to make sure that the tender newcomer has to face no hurdle on its way up. The rest of the job, the real job, that the seed and pit split, that a bud or shoot sprout out from it, that come leaves of many wonderful kinds and colour, that come flowers and fruits (of mind-boggling colours, varieties, smells and tastes), is a job taken care of by someone else. This is art and power alive which no human ingenuity can even come close to by making one leaf, one petal in that manner. Therefore, at another place in the Qur'ān, it was said: أَفَرَءَيْتُم مَّا تَحْرُثُونَ ءَأَنتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُۥٓ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّٰرِعُونَ that is, 'Do you see the seed that you sow? Do you make it grow, or are We the One who makes it grow [the real Creator to whom its growth has to be attributed]? - 56-63.'

Then, it was said: يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَمُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتِ مِنَ الْحَيِّ (He brings forth the living from the dead, and He is the one who brings forth the dead from the living). The 'dead' or lifeless refers to cell or egg which serve to create human and animal life forms. Similarly, the expression: 'dead from the living' refers to the same cell or egg which issues forth from the living.

After that, it was said: ذَٰلِكُمُ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّىٰ تُؤْفَكُونَ (That is Allah. Whereto, then, are you straying away?). In other words, the sense is that all these things have been done by Allah Ta'ālā alone, yet here you are knowingly straying away to strange directions, such as, taking self-carved idols as your removers of difficulties and fulfillers of needs and thus the objects of your worship.

Said in the second verse (96) is: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ '(He is) the One who causes the dawn to break.' The word: فَالِق (*Fāliq*) means one who splits, and the word: الْإِصْبَاح (*al-Iṣbāḥ*) here means the time of morning. Thus, the expression: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (*Fāliq al-Iṣbāḥ*) means one who splits the morning, that is, one who tears the dark layer of darkness apart and brings the morning out. This too is one of those functions of such magnitude that would render the combined powers of all Jinns and human beings and

all others to nothing. It does not take much to realize the truth of it. Everyone with a pair of sighted eyes is compelled to concede that the causer and creator of the morning light from the darkness of the night cannot be a human being, or angel, or any other created being, from fact or fiction. Instead of all that, the undeniable truth is that this is the work of that One Being that created the whole universe, a Being beyond human comprehension.

Night for Rest is a Blessing

After that, it was said: وَجَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا (And He has made the night for rest). The word: سَكَنٌ (*sakan*) is a derivation from : سُكُوْن (*sukūn*). Everything - means, time or place - by having or reaching which one feels peaceful and comfortable is called *sakan*, therefore, the home of a person has been referred to as *sakan* in the Holy Qur'ān: جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ بُيُوْتِكُمْ سَكَنًا (Allah made for you your home a place to rest - 16:80). This is so because the home of a person, even if it be a hut, is a habitual source of peace and comfort. Therefore, this sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta'ālā has made the night a time of peace and comfort for every living being. By saying: فَالِقُ الْإِصْبَاحِ (*Fāliq al-Iṣbāḥ*: the One who causes the dawn to break) mentioned there were blessings which one benefits from during the light of the day, something that would not be equally possible during the darkness of night. Then, by saying: جَعَلَ الَّيْلَ سَكَنًا (made the night for rest) after that, indication was given that, no doubt the light of the day is a great blessing for human beings transacting most of their businesses and chores with its help, but not that bad is the darkness of night, for that too is a big blessing when it helps a person, all tired after a hard day's work, get the rest needed to go back to work with recovered energy. Otherwise, human nature cannot withstand respite-less labour.

Earmarking the darkness of night for comfort is a regular blessing and, certainly, a special demonstration of the irresistably subjugating power of Allah Ta'ālā. Since this blessing comes handy every day without having to ask for it, one hardly bothers to think how great a favour and reward it is. Imagine if everyone were to fix a time of rest with one's choice, then, someone would be getting ready to sleep at eight in the morning, someone else at twelve noon and there will others sleeping at all sorts of odd hours during the day and night. The re-

sult would have been that there would have not come a single hour out of the twenty four hours of the night and day when human beings would have not been busy with their business, job or work and plants and factories would have not been working as usual. The inevitable result of such breathless activity would have been that the peace of the sleeping would have been disturbed and equally disadvantaged would have been those working on their jobs. The high decibel of discordant sounds emitting from traffic, factories and workers themselves would have interfered with the peace of the sleeping, and the absence of the sleeping would have affected those working on their jobs. In addition to that, those sleeping would have missed doing things which can be done only when it is time for them to sleep. In short, Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* has, in His great power to subdue, has set upon, not only human beings but on all living creatures, the weight of sleep in a manner that one is compelled to stop working and go to sleep. With the fall of dusk, birds and beasts and cattle head for their nests, lairs and homes. Man has to stop working as a compulsion and has to start looking towards his place of rest. Silence reigns. Darkness of night becomes an ally of sleep and rest, as light is usually not conducive to sleep.

Just imagine what would happen if all governments and peoples of the world joined hands in a global agreement to fix a universal time to sleep. First of all this would have posed too many problems. Then, should all human beings, abiding by a possible agreement, were to sleep at an appointed time, who would have made animals abide by that agreement? If they roamed around scot-free what would have happened to the sleeping human beings and their belongings? Most exalted is the majesty of Allah and great is His power to subdue that He has appointed sleep to descend upon every human being and every living creature at a given time compulsively, and thus, He has saved them from the very need of such international agreements: فَتَبَارَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ (So, blessed be Allah, the Best of creators) (23:14).

Solar and Lunar Calendar

In the next sentence : وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ حُسْبَانًا (and the sun and the moon for measurement), the word: حُسْبَان (*Ḥusban*) is a verbal noun and is used to mean to count, measure, calculate or compute. The sense of the verse is that Allah Ta'ālā has appointed the rising and setting and the move-

ment of the sun and the moon in a particular measure through which human beings can easily calculate years, months, days, hours, even minutes and seconds.

Again, this is the manifestation of the same Divine power to subdue and commission into desired action that such huge glowing globes of awesome proportions and their movements have been so formidably programmed to perform according to measure which just does not vary even by a second despite the passage of thousands of years. Whatever machinery has been employed to make them function so flawlessly certainly needs no workshop, nor needed there is our customary repair and replacement of time-barred parts. The spheres of light, their function, their movement, everything in the system is performing perfectly as commanded: لَا الشَّمْسُ يَنۢبَغِىْ لَهَآ اَنْ تُدْرِكَ الْقَمَرَ وَلَا الَّيْلُ سَابِقُ النَّهَارِ : "It behoves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day" - 36:40 (as translated by Arberry). Alas, it must have been because of this formidable and changeless Divine system that man was mistaken as he took these manifestation of the system as existing in their own right, even went on to the limits of worshipping them. Had this system been open to flaws, a little malfunction here and there, some time out for repairs, then, one would have discovered that this mechanism is not automatic, somebody has made it and somebody keeps it running. But, such has been the brilliance and permanence of these great heavenly bodies that human beings have been blinded to the reality behind. It was to let them know what it was that came scriptures and prophets and messengers.

This statement of the Qur'ān also indicates that the calculation of years and months can be solar and it can be lunar as well. Both are rewards from Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū*. It is a different matter that the lunar calendar has been used in Islamic injunctions for the sake of providing convenience to the common masses of the world so that they do not have to undergo the trouble of complicated calculations. Since Islamic history and Islamic injunctions are based on lunar calendar, it is an obligation on the Muslim *Ummah* that it retains and protects this calendar. As for other methods of calculation, such as the Solar or Gregorian calendar, if they are adopted because of some necessity, there is no sin in it. But, ignoring the lunar calendar totally and let-

ting it be forgotten is a grave sin - an unfortunate conduct which may lead to a situation in which a Muslim does not know when the months of Ramaḍān, Dhil-Ḥijjah and Muḥarram will come.

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكَ تَقْدِيْرُ الْعَزِيْزِ الْعَلِيْمِ (This is a measure set by [Allah] the Mighty, the Knowing). It means that this wondrous system of movement, precise and perpetual, at the scale of such magnitude, something which does not admit the difference of a second, can only be the charismatic feat of the supreme power of the One who is Al-'Azīz, the Mighty, and who is the Subduer of whatever there is, and who if fully capable of articulating His Will as He deems fit and, beside that, He is Knowing, having the knowledge of everything and the mastery of doing what He elects to do.

In the third verse (97), it was said: وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُوْمَ لِتَهْتَدُوْا بِهَا فِيْ ظُلُمٰتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ (And He is the one who made for you the stars, so that you may be guided by them in 'darknesses' of the land and the sea). In other words, it is being said here that there are other stars too, besides the sun and the moon, which are no less unique a manifestation of the perfect power of Almighty Allah. Out of many considerations of Divine wisdom, one immediate benefit they provide for human beings travelling on high seas or open lands is that they can chart their course in the darkness of nights when it is not easy to do so. Experience bears out that even in the days of highly sophisticated guiding systems, there are alternative situations when the guidance from the position of stars cannot be totally ignored.

The point made in this verse is that one should rise above heedlessness and shortsightedness and see that these stars are also there observing the command of their maker and mover. They are there neither by themselves nor to be there nor to keep doing what they do for ever. Those who have pinned their sights on them and have ignored to look at their maker are terribly short-sighted, and ominously deceived indeed.

After that, it was said: قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (We have elaborated the signs for people who know). The statement clearly indicates that those who do not recognize the presence and power of Allah Ta'ālā even from such open signs are unaware and unconscious.

In the fourth verse (98), it was said: وَهُوَالَّذِیْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنْ نَّفْسٍ وَّاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّمُسْتَوْدَعٌ (And He is the One who created you from one person, then, you have a place to dwell, and a place to sojourn). The word: مُسْتَقَرٌّ (*mustaqarr*) used in the text is from: قَرَارٌ (*qarār*). So, *mustaqarr* denotes a place of *qarār*, of rest and peace, for someone or something. As for the word: مُسْتَوْدَعٌ (*mustawda'*) in the text, it is a derivation from *wadī'ah* which means to keep something with someone temporarily for a few days. So, "*mustawda'*" will denote a place where something is placed temporarily for a few days.

Thus, the sense of the sentence would be: It is the sacred-most Being of Allah Ta'ālā that has created man from one person, that is, Sayyidnā Ādam علیہ السلام. Then, made for him a *mustaqarr*, that is, a place to dwell for a certain length of time - and a *mustawda'*, that is, to stay temporarily for a few days.

The words of the Qur'ān are as they have been stated. But, there are many probabilities in their interpretation. This is why the sayings of the commentators differ in this matter. Some say that *mustawda'* is the womb of the mother and *mustaqarr* is this world. Others say that *mustawda'* is the grave and *mustaqarr* is the abode of the *'Ākhirah*. Then, there are several other sayings too. However, there is room for all these within the words of the Qur'ān. Hadrat Qādī Thanā'ullah Pānipatī رحمہ اللہ علیہ has, in his *Tafsīr* Mazharī, opted for *mustaqarr* being the abode of *'Ākhirah*, that is, *Jannah* or *Jahannam*- and all human conditions and stages, from the beginning to the *'Ākhirah*, are all the *mustawda'*, that is, a place to stay temporarily, whether in the womb of the mother, or a dwelling place on the earth, or the grave, or the state of *Barzakh* (intermediary state after death and before Resurrection). Preference for this view seems to have confirmation from a verse of the Qur'ān also where it has been said: لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ (you shall surely travel from stage to stage - 84:19). The outcome is that, before ultimately reaching the abode of the *'Ākhirah*, man remains a traveller for his whole life who, despite his obvious peace and rest, is really traversing the stages of the long journey into the night of his being:

مسافر هوں کہاں جانا هے ، نا واقف هوں منزل سے
ازل سے پھرتے پھرتے گورتك پہنچا هوں مشكل سے

A traveller I am. My destination I know not.
Winding and wandering from eternity
Only upto the grave I have reached -
How tough I know. What next I know not.

In conclusion, it can be said that this last verse (98) under study is showing a mirror to those who, having sold their souls to the veneer of glamour they see in the obvious and to the craze for things and trends they envy in their fellow beings, have forgotten that their place is elsewhere, that they have to go to their Creator and that there is a journey ahead, to the ultimate domain of the '*Ākhirah*. The message is: Open your eyes, see reality, walk away from the web of deception and walk into salvation.

Verses 99 - 102

وَهُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ۚ فَاَخْرَجْنَا بِهٖ نَبَاتَ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
فَاَخْرَجْنَا مِنْهُ خَضِرًا نُّخْرِجُ مِنْهُ حَبًّا مُّتَرَاكِبًا ۚ وَمِنَ النَّخْلِ
مِنْ طَلْعِهَا قِنْوَانٌ دَانِيَةٌ وَّجَنّٰتٍ مِّنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ
مُشْتَبِهًا وَّغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ ۗ اُنْظُرُوْٓا اِلٰى ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَيَنْعِهٖ ۗ اِنَّ
فِيْ ذٰلِكُمْ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٩٩﴾ وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ شُرَكَآءَ
الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ وَخَرَقُوْا لَهٗ بَنِيْنَ وَ بَنٰتٍۢ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ سُبْحٰنَهٗ
وَتَعٰلٰى عَمَّا يَصِفُوْنَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ بَدِيْعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ اَنّٰى
يَكُوْنُ لَهٗ وَلَدٌ وَّلَمْ تَكُنْ لَّهٗ صَاحِبَةٌ ۗ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ ۚ وَهُوَ
بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾ ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ ۚ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ خَالِقُ
كُلِّ شَيْءٍ فَاعْبُدُوْهُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّكِيْلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

And He is the one who sent down water from the heavens, then, with it, We brought forth vegetation of all kinds. Then from it We brought grains set upon one another. And from the palm-trees, from their spathes, come forth the low-hanging bunches. And (We produce) vineyards, the olive, the pomegranate, similar or not similar to each other. Look at its fruit when it

bears fruit, and at its ripening. Surely, in all this there are signs for the people who believe. [99]

And they have invented partners with Allah, the Jinns - while He has created them - and they have forged for Him sons and daughters without any knowledge. Pure is He, and far higher than they describe. [100]

(He is) the originator of the heavens and the earth. How can He have a son when He never had a wife? And He created everything, and He knows everything. [101]

This is Allah: your Lord, there is no God but He, the creator of everything; so, worship Him. And He is Guardian over everything. [102]

Commentary

The contents of this verse present a unique concern for thematic order. It will be noticed that three kinds of universes have been mentioned here: The low, the high and the atmosphere - that is, what generates in what we know as the Biosphere. The description was initiated with the mention of that which is on the lower level because it is closer to us. Then, it was split in two parts. One part of the statement covered vegetation which grows on the land, plants and trees and gardens. The other part featured life forms as beasts, human beings and animals. The first part was given precedence because it is more obvious as compared to the other. Then comes the case of that which has been made to come after, the other part. This is different. It has *Rūḥ*, soul or spirit. It is deep, depends on progression from the sperm to its various stages and attending conditions, something allied with the comprehension, diagnosis and judgement of physicians - contrary to the case of vegetation which, in its growth, flowering and ripening etc., is observable commonly. Then, mentioned there was the atmosphere and its life support system, the morning and the evening. Then, came the mention of what is higher, the sun, the moon, and the stars. After that, since what is at the lower level is observed more frequently, the subject was repeated and made the concluding statement. But, firstly it was taken up briefly, now it was taken up in detail - yet, in the order of this detail, the order of brevity was reversed by giving precedence to life forms and succession to the mention of vegetation. Perhaps, its

basis is that the detailed statement highlights the expression of gratitude for blessings which, in that status, makes the blessed - being the intended recepients - deserving of being given precedence. As for vegetation, the previous order stays as the status of the donees, that is, of seeds and pits, remains preceded. That rain has been mentioned in between is subservient to the mention of vegetation. Incidentally, there might be another element of refinement here - in that rain has different states. In terms of its origin, it comes from the high; and in terms of its destination, it comes down to the low; and in terms of the distance covered, it is part of the atmosphere.

Verses 103 - 107

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ ۖ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيفُ الْخَبِيرُ
﴿١٠٣﴾ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرُ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ
عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۚ وَمَا أَنَا عَلَيْكُمْ بِحَفِيظٍ ﴿١٠٤﴾ وَكَذَٰلِكَ
نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ وَلِيَقُولُوا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾
اتَّبِعْ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ ۖ لَا إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۖ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ
الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكُوا ۗ وَمَا جَعَلْنَاكَ
عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا ۖ وَمَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ ﴿١٠٧﴾

No vision can comprehend Him and He comprehends all visions, and He is All-Fine, All-Aware. [103]

(Say, O Prophet:) There have come to you insights from your Lord. Now, whoever uses his sight, does so for his own self, and whoever remains blind does so against himself. And I do not stand guard over you. [104]

And this is how We bring a variety of verses so that they say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge. [105]

Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord. There is no god but He. And turn away from those who associate partners with Allah. [106]

And if Allah willed, they would not have associated.

And We have not made you to stand guard over them, and you are not entrusted with their affairs. [107]

Commentary

Out of these five verses of Sūrah Al-An'ām, the word: أَبْصَار : *'al-abṣār'* appearing in the first verse (103), is the plural of : بَصَر (*baṣar*) which means vision, sight or ability to see, while the word: إِدْرَاك (*idrāk*) means to reach, grasp, perceive, comprehend or encompass. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has explained the meaning of *'idrāk'* at this place as to comprehend or encompass. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Thus, the sense of the verse comes to be that even the combined ability of seeing given to the entire creation, to Jinns and humans and angels, and to the rest of the life forms, can never see Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* in a way that their vision would encompass His Being. But, as for Him, He watches the vision of His entire creation fully, and His 'seeing' encompasses all of them. Mentioned in this brief verse are two particular attributes of Allah Ta'ālā.

1. Allah is Imperceivable: No eye in the whole universe, not even the combined eyesights of everyone, can encompass His Being.

Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī رضی اللہ عنہ reports that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: If all human beings, Jinn, angels and Shaytan, from the first to the last, were to stand in a row, even their combined sights cannot comprehend His Being. (Maẓharī with reference to Ibn Abī Ḥātim)

Thus, so unique an attribute can belong to none but to the most-exalted Being of Allah. Otherwise, the sight bestowed by Allah on even the most insignificant life form of His creation can see with its mini-eyes much larger bodies and comprehend what they are. The sun and the moon are spheres of great magnitude, our earth being no match to them, yet the human eye, even the eyes of the smallest of animals, would see them in a way that would encompass their presence.

The truth of the matter is that the human eye is one sense organ out of the many given to human beings which enable them to see and react to what is perceptible. But, the Sacred Being of Allah Ta'ālā is beyond the all-surrounding, all-comprehending overview of even reason and conjecture. There is no way this knowledge could be acquired

by one single sense of sight. The Being and the Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā are limitless while human senses, reason and imagination are all limited. It is obvious that the limitless cannot fit into the limited. This is why the philosophers and metaphysicians of the world who spent their lives in intellectual research and the respected Sufis who traversed through this difficult spiritual field through the medium of Illumination (*Kashf*) and Experiencing of the Presence (*Shuhud*) all agree upon the proposition that neither has anyone arrived at the total comprehension of the reality of His Being and Attributes, nor is that possible.

The Possibility of Seeing the Creator

The question is: Is it possible for human beings to see Allah Ta'ālā, or is it not? On this religious question or *mas'alah*, the belief of all *'Ulamā* of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* (the majority of Muslims who adhere to the *Sunnah* of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his Ṣaḥābah) is that it is not possible to see the Being of Allah Ta'ālā in the state of life we have in this mortal world. This is the reason why, when Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام prayed: رَبِّ أَرِنِي (My Lord, show (Yourself) to me - 7:143), the answer given was: لَنْ تَرَانِي ('*lan taranī*' : 'you shall never see Me' - 7:143). It is obvious when this is the answer given to a prophet no less than Sayyidnā Mūsā the Kalīmullāh عليه السلام, no Jinn or human being can even dare think about it. However, that believing Muslims will have the honour of seeing Allah Ta'ālā in the '*Ākhirah* stands proved on the authority of sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) and strong '*Aḥādīth* which have been reported in uninterrupted succession (*mutawātir*). And this is what appears in the Qur'ān itself:

وُجُوْهٌ يَّوْمَئِذٍ نَّاضِرَةٌ اِلٰى رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ

Faces on that Day shall be glowing, towards their Lord gazing! - 75:22

However, the disbelievers and the deniers will not have the honour of seeing Allah Ta'ālā even on that Day, as punishment, as in a verse of the Qur'ān:

كَلَّآ اِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَّبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَّمَحْجُوْبُوْنَ،

No indeed; surely from (the sighting of) their Lord on that Day, they shall be deprived - 83:15.

The Ziarah (the honour of seeing or visiting) of Allah Ta'ālā shall take place in *'Ākhirah* at several places - and on the Day of Resurrection (*Al-Maḥshar*) as well as after reaching *Jannah* (Paradise). For the people of *Jannah*, the Ziarah of Allah Ta'ālā shall be the greatest of all blessings.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When the people of *Jannah* have entered *Jannah*, Allah Ta'ālā will ask them if they need any more blessings besides what they have already received in *Jannah*; if so, let them ask and they shall be granted those too. They will say: O Allah, You granted us deliverance from *Jahannam* (Hell), and admitted us into the *Jannah* (Paradise). What else could we ask for? That would be the time when the Veil shall stand removed, everyone shall have the honour to see Allah Ta'ālā, and of all the blessings of *Jannah*, this will be the greatest. This *Ḥadīth* appears in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim as reported by Sayyidnā Ṣuhayb رضى الله عنه .

As reported in a *Ḥadīth* from the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was sitting under moonlight. His noble Saḥābah were with him. He looked at the moon, then said: You shall see your *Rabb* with your own eyes (in the *'Ākhirah*) in a way you are seeing this moon.

In a *Ḥadīth* of Tirmidhī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that people blessed with special ranks of *Jannah* by Allah Ta'ālā will have the good fortune of seeing Him every morning and evening.

In short, no one can see Allah Ta'ālā in the mortal world while, in the *'Ākhirah*, all those in *Jannah* will see Him. As for the Ziyarah made by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم on the night of *Mi'rāj* (the Ascent to the Heavens), that too was, in reality, the Ziarah of Allah Ta'ālā as it would be in the *Ākhirah*. According to Shaykh Muḥiyuddīn ibn al-'Arabī, the world is what lies circumscribed by the skies. Beyond that is the domain of *'Ākhirah*. A Ziyarah there cannot be called a Ziyarah here in the world.

Now, still unanswered remains the question: When we know from the verse of the Qur'ān: لَاتُدۡرِكُهُ الۡاَبۡصَارُ (no vision can comprehend Him), that is, human beings just cannot see Allah Ta'ālā, how would that be-

come possible in the *'Ākhirah*? The obvious answer is that the verse of the Qur'ān does not mean that the *Ru'yah, Ziyarah* or Seeing of Allah Ta'ālā is impossible for human beings. Instead of that, the meaning of the verse is that human vision cannot comprehend or encompass His Being because His Being is unlimited while human vision is limited.

Even the Ziyarah made in the *'Ākhirah* will be in a manner that vision would still fail to comprehend Him fully; while in the mortal world, human beings and their vision do not have the strength and capacity to bear by 'seeing' even in this manner. Therefore, this *ru'yah* or seeing is absolutely impossible in the mortal world. But, in the *'Ākhirah*, given the strength and capability, this *ru'yah, ziyarah*, or seeing would become possible - but, a full, all-encompassing comprehending of the Most-True Being of Allah *Subhānuhu wa Ta'ālā* would still remain impossible even then.

2. Allah is All-Perceiving: The second attribute of Allah Ta'ālā mentioned in this verse is that His vision encompasses the whole universe. Nothing, anywhere, not even the minutest particle, is hidden from Him. This Absolute Knowledge with all-pervading, all-comprehending reach, is also a unique attribute of Allah Ta'ālā. Other than Him, no created being has ever achieved such all-inclusive knowledge of everything, nor shall it ever be possible - because this is the domain of Allah, the most-exalted in His majesty.

After that it was said: (and He is All-Fine, All-Aware). Lexically, the word: اَللَّطِيْفُ (*al-Laṭīf*) has two meanings: (a) kind, (b) fine or subtle in contrast with thick or course, that is, what cannot be perceived through the senses.

As for the word: اَلْخَبِيْرُ (*al-Khabīr*), it means All-Aware. Thus, the sentence comes to mean that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Fine (*Al-Laṭīf*), therefore, He cannot be comprehended through the senses - and He is All-Aware (*Al-Khabīr*), therefore, nothing in the entire universe is beyond His knowledge and awareness. If *Al-Laṭīf* is taken to mean kind at this place, it will be suggesting that though Allah Ta'ālā is All-Aware of everything we say or do, even what we intend, think or feel - which would have required that we should have been caught for every sin - but, He is kind and gracious too, therefore, He does not call us to account for every sin.

The word: بَصَآئِر (*baṣā'ir*) appearing in the second verse (104) is the plural of *baṣīrah* which means reason, intelligence or insight, that is, the power through which one can acquire the knowledge of things which do not fall within the range of perception through the senses. '*Baṣā'ir*', in this verse, means the evidences and sources through which one can get to know truth and reality. The meaning of the verse is: The sources and means of seeing the truth have reached you from Allah, that is, the Qur'ān has come, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has come, manifest have been his miracles, and observed openly were his morals and dealings and teachings. All these are means of seeing the truth.

So, whoever has used these means has become the one blessed with true insight with his benefits secured, while the one who elected to remain blind to the truth by ignoring these means ends up losing what was good.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: 'I do not stand guard over you.' It means that the Holy Prophet ﷺ has not been given the responsibility of forcing people to stop doing what was improper, as usually done by one appointed to oversee and guard (or self-appointed as vigilantes in our day). Instead, the functional responsibility of a messenger of Allah is only to convey commands, and explain. After that, following or not following the message conveyed becomes a matter of personal discretion and responsibility of the addressees.

It will be recalled that many clear arguments in favour of *Tauḥīd* (Oneness of Allah) and *Risālah* (The Veracity of Prophethood) had appeared in previous verses. It is to these that reference has been made in the third verse (105) here where it has been said: كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ (And this is how We bring forth a variety of verses [where arguments are presented from different angles]).

After that, it was said: وَلِيَقُوْلُوْا دَرَسْتَ وَلِنُبَيِّنَهٗ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ (so that they may say, "you have been tutored" and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). From here it can be inferred that all aids to guidance in the form of miracles, signs, proofs, and the matchless Qur'ān itself were all solid means to help see truth. Then, there was the spectacle of a total *Ummiyy* expressing with inimitable eloquence volumes of knowledge and reality through his blessed speech which has left the wise of the world wondering. And how could one bypass

the eloquence and truth of the Word of Allah which could not be imitated even to the scale of one small Sūrah, despite the challenge to all Jinn and human beings valid upto the end of time? As we said, these were means to help people know and see the truth as it was. Such was the class and substance of this treasure trove of truth that even the most diehard denier should have fallen on the blessed feet of the Holy Prophet ﷺ ! But, people who were chronically crooked in their ways started saying: "دَرَسْتَ" (*darasta*), that is, 'you have been tutored.'

Then, said along with it was: وَلِنُبَيِّنَهُ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (and so that We may explain it to the people who have knowledge). Its essential meaning is that the statement made proved to be beneficial for those who were understanding, sensible and wise. As for the sources of guidance, those were surely placed before everyone, but the crooked took no advantage of the opportunity offered while the wise ones owned them heartily and became the leaders of their world.

In the fourth verse (106), the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم has been guided to a specific course of action. He has been asked not to worry about the acceptance or non-acceptance of the call. For him, the best course was to keep following the way revealed to him through Waḥy from his *Rabb*, the major element of which is the belief that no one is worthy of worship but Allah. That he should continue preaching with his message of truth is part of what has been revealed. So, believing in Allah and remaining steadfast on the way ordained for him, he should avoid feeling concerned about disbelievers and their unfortunate non-acceptance of the call.

The reason for this has been given in the fifth verse (107). There it has been said: If Allah Ta'ālā had willed - in consideration of His own creational imperative - that the whole human race should become Muslim in faith, then, it would have become impossible for them to associate partners in the Divinity of Allah (*Shirk*). But, it was because of their misdeeds that Allah willed that they be punished. So, He created the necessary conditions for that end. Now, how could he make them Muslims under these circumstances? In fact, why should he worry about what they choose to do with their lives? Allah has not made him to stand guard over what they do, nor has he been authorized by Allah to bring punishment on them for their misdeeds. Therefore, he should

not have any anxiety on account of what they do to themselves or for themselves.

Verses 108 - 113

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِيْنَ يَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللّٰهَ عَدْوًا ۢ
بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَّا لِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ عَمَلَهُمْ ۠ ثُمَّ اِلٰى رَبِّهِمْ
مَّرْجِعُهُمْ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ وَاَقْسَمُوْا بِاللّٰهِ
جَهْدَ اَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ جَاۗءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ لَّيُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهَا ۭ قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْاٰيٰتُ
عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَمَا يُشْعِرُكُمْ ۙ اَنَّهَآ اِذَا جَاۗءَتْ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٠٩﴾
وَنُقَلِّبُ اَفْـِٕدَتَهُمْ وَاَبْصَارَهُمْ كَمَا لَمْ يُؤْمِنُوْا بِهٖٓ اَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ
وَّنَذَرُهُمْ فِيْ طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُوْنَ ﴿١١٠﴾ وَلَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمُ
الْمَلٰۗىِٕكَةَ وَكَلَّمَهُمُ الْمَوْتٰى وَحَشَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ قُبُلًا مَّا كَانُوْا
لِيُؤْمِنُوْٓا اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ يَجْهَلُوْنَ ﴿١١١﴾
وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيٰطِيْنَ الْاِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ يُوْحِيْ
بَعْضُهُمْ اِلٰى بَعْضٍ زُخْرُفَ الْقَوْلِ غُرُوْرًا ۭ وَلَوْ شَاۗءَ رَبُّكَ
مَا فَعَلُوْهُ فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿١١٢﴾ وَلِتَصْغٰٓى اِلَيْهِ اَفْـِٕدَةُ
الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَلِيَرْضَوْهُ وَلِيَقْتَرِفُوْا مَا هُمْ
مُّقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿١١٣﴾

And do not abuse* those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they should abuse* Allah trangressingly without knowledge. This is how We have made the deeds of every community attractive in their sight. Then, to their Lord is their return whereafter He shall tell them what they have been doing. [108]

And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths that if a sign comes to them, they shall surely believe in it. Say, "Signs are, definitely, with Allah." And what will make

*. Insult using foul language.

you realize that even when they (the signs) come, they will not believe - [109] **and We upset their hearts and sights - as they did not believe in them the first time. And We leave them wandering blindly in their rebellion.** [110]

And if We had sent down to them the angels and the dead had spoken to them and (even if) We had gathered everything before them, face to face, still, they were not to believe unless Allah would have so willed. But, most of them go for ignorance. [111]

And similarly, We have made enemies for every prophet, the satans of mankind and jinn. They reveal to one another ornamented words in order to deceive. And had Allah willed, they would have not done so. So, leave them with what they forge [112] **- and in order that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline to it and so that they commit what they are to commit.** [113]

Commentary

The first of the present verses has been revealed concerning a particular event and provides guidance in a matter of principle, that is, what you are not permitted to do yourself, for that you cannot become the cause or channel either - both shall remain equally impermissible.

The Background of Revelation

According to the background of revelation as narrated by Ibn Jarīr, when Abū Ṭālib, the respected uncle of the Holy Prophet ﷺ was on his death bed, the disbelieving chiefs of the tribe of Quraysh who, hostile and torturous to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, always plotting to kill him, became alarmed at the eventuality of the death of Abū Ṭālib which was likely to become an impediment to their nefarious designs. Because, they thought, if they were to kill Muḥammad ﷺ after his protective uncle's death, that would go against the norms of their own self-respect and honour, for people would say that they were unable to do anything like that in the presence of Abū Ṭālib, but when he died, they killed his helpless nephew. So, they decided to get together and go to Abū Ṭālib to talk about the matter in a decisive manner.

Every educated Muslim knows that Abū Ṭālib, though he had not

formally embraced Islam, loved the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم dearly, even respected him as a great bearer of the Divine message right from his heart, and always defended him against his enemies.

So, the Quraysh chiefs formed a deputation who would go to see Abū Ṭālib. Included as members of the deputation were Abū Sufyān, Abū Jahl, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ and some others. The name of the person chosen to arrange for an appointment to meet with Abū Ṭālib was Muṭṭalib. He got his permission and escorted the deputation to him.

To Abū Ṭālib, the deputation said: You are our elder, and a chief, and you know that your nephew, Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم has been causing great pain to the idols we worship. We wish that you would talk to him and prevail on him that he should say nothing offensive against our idols, in which case, we shall make peace on the principle that he acts as he wishes on his faith, takes whoever he chooses as the object of his worship, against which, we shall raise no objection.

Abū Ṭālib called the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم to him and said: Here are the chiefs of your clan. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم turned to the deputation and asked: What is your wish? They said: We wish that you leave us and our idols alone. Do not speak ill of them. We shall leave you and your object of worship alone. This will end our mutual hostility.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, you tell me, if I were to accept what you were saying, would you be ready to say a *Kalimah* (statement in words) by saying which you would become masters of the whole Arabia with even people from beyond subscribing to your authority?

Abū Jahl said: You are talking about only one *Kalimah*. We are ready to say ten of them. Tell us what are they? The Holy Prophet ﷺ said: لَآ إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ [*Lā Ilāha Illallāh* : There is no god (worthy of worship) but Allah]. That infuriated all of them. Abū Ṭālib said to the Holy Prophet ﷺ: O my nephew, say something other than this *Kalimah* because it has left your clansmen all confused.

He said: As for me, I cannot say a *Kalimah* other than this. If they were to bring the sun down from the skies and put in my hands, even then I will not say a *Kalimah* other than this. His intention was to let

them become totally disappointed.

Thereupon, still in anger, they said: Either you stop speaking ill of our idols, the objects of our worship, or we too are going to start using insulting language against you, and also against that Being of which you claim to be the messenger. Revealed, thereupon, was the verse: وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ (And do not abuse those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they abuse Allah transgressively without knowledge).

"لَا تَسُبُّوا" (*lā tasubbū*) in this verse is a derivation from the word: سَبّ (*sabb*) which means to abuse or use insulting language against someone (not in the sense of misuse, maltreatment or corrupt practice as currently used in American English which uses other alternates for hurling invectives – Tr.). The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, given his intrinsically high moral disposition, had already been abiding by this rule of conduct. Not even during his childhood, had his blessed speech ever been contaminated with an abusive word for any human being, rather not even for an animal. Perhaps, there may have been some hard word which escaped the lips of some from among the noble Companions which was overestimated as an invective by the disbelievers of Makkah, and which was used as a pretext by the chiefs of the Quraysh when their deputation brought this case up before the Holy Prophet ﷺ and gave the ultimatum that either he stops insulting their deities or they would start insulting theirs.

Thereupon, came the Qur'ānic injunction through which Muslims were prohibited from making any insulting statement against the false objects worshipped by disbelievers. Particularly worth noticing in this verse is that, just a verse earlier (106-107), the address was to the Holy Prophet ﷺ himself. Examples are: اِتَّبِعْ مَآ اُوْحِىَ اِلَيْكَ مِنْ رَّبِّكَ (Follow what has been revealed to you from your Lord) and: اَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ (and turn away from those who associate partners with Allah) and: مَا جَعَلْنٰكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيْظًا (And We have not made you to stand guard over them) and: مَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ (and you are not entrusted with their affairs). In all these grammatical forms, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم was the addressee who was being asked to do or not to do something. After that, the form of address was changed in the present verse. It was turned away from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم and was turned to Muslims in general.

Said there was: لَا تَسُبُّوا (*lā tasubbū*). The hint given thereby is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who had never used abusive speech against anyone to start with, could not be directly addressed with the words of prohibition for that could make him disheartened. Therefore, the address was made general - and all Ṣaḥābah عليه السلام too started taking precaution in this matter. (As in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Related Considerations

That idols have been mentioned in strong words in several verses of the Qur'ān, and that those verses are not abrogated either for they are still recited, is a different matter.

The answer is that such words wherever they appear in the verses of the Qur'ān are there as a polemic or debating device to unfold some reality clearly. Intended at such places is no aggression, nor can a sensible person deduce from it such an intention to malign idols or to mock at disbelievers or to irritate them. This is an open difference in approach which is readily understood by those aware of the nuances of diction in any language. They know that the shortcoming or inadequacy of a person is called in question only to elucidate an issue in question. This is common practice in courts where no one challenges the statement being made before the Court as the throwing of invectives against someone. Similarly, narrated before physicians are the kind of defects and drawbacks people could have which, if described elsewhere would be taken as invectives hurled at someone. But, such statement made under medical need is not regarded as abusive talk by anyone.

Thus, when the Qur'ān describes the helplessness of idols in being devoid of sense and consciousness, knowledge and power, it uses a manner of speaking which would help the understanding to understand reality and expose the error or short-sightedness of those who do not. Hence, it was said: ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ 'Weak are the seekers and weak, the sought (idols) - 22:73.' And as it was said: إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ جَهَنَّمَ (You, and what you worship, other than Allah, are but fuel for Hell - 21:98). Here too, the purpose is not to speak ill of someone. The purpose is to state the sad end of straying and error. Muslim jurists, may the mercy of Allah be upon them, have made it all clear by explaining: If anyone were to recite this verse too as a tool aimed at

causing irritation for disbelievers, then, for him, this recitation at that time and for that purpose, shall be considered as included under this 'abusing which is prohibited,' and will, therefore, be impermissible - as is the case in the prohibition of the recitation of the Qur'ān at times and places which are *Makrūh* (reprehensible) and known to everyone. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī).

To sum up, it can be said that, no word which could be taken as abusive was ever said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, or had appeared in the Holy Qur'ān, nor was there any apprehension that it could happen in the future. Of course, the probability that Muslims at large may fall into such impulsive action did exist, therefore, this verse stopped them from doing so. This event and the Qur'ānic instruction based on it has provided access to a large body of significant knowledge, some examples of which are given below:

Becoming the Cause or Agent of a Sin is also a Sin

1. One of the principles thus deduced is: If doing something which is permissible intrinsically - in fact, even commendable in a certain degree - but, in the actual doing of it some corruption has to be accomodated, or as a result of which, people are let into sin, then, the doing of such a thing is also prohibited. The reason is that identifying false objects of worship, that is, the idols, is, at least, permissible after all - and if said under the need to uphold one's religious feelings, it may perhaps be even worthy of praise and reward - but, since this resulted in the apprehension that people would start speaking ill of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* which, in turn, would make the degraders of idols the cause of this evil, therefore, prohibited was the act which was already permissible.

2. Another example of this appears in *Ḥadīth* where, addressing his Companions, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said: No one should abuse (use insulting language against) his or her parents. The Companions submitted: *Yā Rasūl* Allah, it is just not possible that one will abuse parents. He said: Yes, one does not usually do that. But, when such a person abuses the parents of someone else and, as a consequence of it, the other person abuses his parents, then, the cause of his parents being so abused was this very son. So, he too is like one who has himself abused his parents.

3. Yet another instance of a case of this nature came to pass during the blessed time of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He said to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها that the Baytullah (the Holy Ka'bah) had collapsed on its foundations in an accident during the *Jāhiliyyah*. The Quraysh of Makkah reconstructed it before the advent of prophethood. In this structure, some details turned out to be against the initial Ibrāhīmī foundation. One of them was the part now known as Ḥaṭim. This too is part of the Baytullah. It was left out because of paucity of funds. Then, there were two doors of Baytullah, the Eastern and the Western - one for entry and the other for exit. The people of *Jāhiliyyah* closed the Western door. The one door left was raised higher than the ground level so that entry into the Baytullah would depend on their will and permission and that no one could go there freely. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I wish I could demolish the present structure of Baytullah and make it like the structure raised by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullah عليه السلام. But, the danger is that your people, that is, the common Arabs, who have entered the fold of Islam just now, may fall a victim to some doubts at the sight of Baytullah being demolished, therefore, I have abandoned my intention.

It goes without saying that raising the structure of Baytullah precisely on the foundations laid down by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was an act of obedience and a deed deserving of merit and reward. But, seeing the shadows of a danger lurking behind this intended action because of the ignorance of people around, he abandoned that idea. So, from this event too, there emerges the same principle that, should there be an apprehension of some evil or corruption necessarily resulting from what is permissible, even from what is otherwise an act of *thawāb* or merit, then, that permissible or *thawāb*-worthy act too becomes impermissible.

But, there exists a strong doubt about this principle which has been reported from Abū Manṣūr in Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī. The proposition posed is: Allah Ta'ālā has made *Jihād* binding on Muslims - though, the inevitable outcome of killing is that, when a Muslim will start killing some non-Muslim, they would start killing Muslims - and killing Muslims is *Ḥarām* (forbidden). Thus, given this principle, *Jihad* should also be prohibited. Then, the same will hold valid about our propaga-

tion of Islam and the recitation of the Qur'ān, and about *Adhān* and Ṣalāh as well, all of which are subjected to mockery and ridicule by many among the disbelievers. If so, shall we surrender our right to worship and promote our religion?

Answering this, Abū Mansur has himself said that this doubt has come up because of ignoring a necessary condition. That condition is that a permissible act which has been prohibited, because of the apprehension of something evil, should not be one of the basic objectives and necessary duties in Islam. Thus, speaking ill of false objects of worship does not relate to any objective of Islam. Similarly, no basic Islamic objective depends on making the structure of Baytullah conform precisely to the foundations laid out by Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Therefore, whenever there was the danger of some religious malsituation cropping up by doing what was permissible, or even rewardworthy, such acts or intentions were abandoned. As for acts which are either the very Islamic objectives in themselves, or on them depends some Islamic objective, then, even if the wrongdoings of other people seem to be bringing visible corruption or evil in its wake, then, these objectives will never be surrendered or abandoned. Instead of that, effort will be made that such permissible acts should keep continuing in their place, and steps will be taken to block the spreading of evils and corrupting agents as far as possible.

This is why two great men of Islamic history acted the way they did. Once Ḥasan al-Baṣrī رحمه الله عليه and Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sirīn رحمه الله عليه went out to participate in the Ṣalāh for a *Janāzah*. There, they noticed a gathering which had men as well as women. Seeing this Ibn *Sirīn* returned back. But, Haḍrat Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said: Why should we leave doing what is necessary because of the false practice or ways of other people? The Ṣalāh of *Janāzah* is *Farḍ* (obligatory). It cannot be abandoned because of this corrupting agent. Of course, effort will be made, as far as possible, that this evil is rooted out.

This event too has been reported in Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī.

So, the substance of this principle which emerges from this verse comes to be: An act which is permissible in itself, even if it be an act of obedience and *thawāb* - but, not be one of the religiously binding objectives, then, should doing it bring forth evil consequences, abandoning

of that permissible act becomes *Wājib* (necessary). This is contrary to the case of the objectives of the Sharī'ah which cannot be abandoned because of any impending evil or corruption.

From this principle, the jurists of the Muslim community have deduced solutions to thousands of problems. Some examples of their juristic efforts are:

1. If a person has a disobedient son and he knows that, should he ask him to do something, he would refuse to do it and even prefer to do against it, in which case, he will become liable to a grave sin, then, in such a situation, the father should not ask him to do or not to do something as an order, instead of which, he should say so in the mode of a good counsel - for example, he says to him, 'if such and such job could be done, that would be nice' - so that, in the eventuality of a refusal or reverse action, the son does not become liable to the sin of a new disobedience. (*Khulāṣatul-Fatāwā*)

2. The same rule holds good in matters where well-meaning advice is given to someone. If circumstancial indicators show that a person, rather than take advice, is more likely to take a worse course, as a result of which, he will sink deeper into sin, then, in such a situation, to give up advising is better. In his Ṣaḥīḥ, Imām al-Bukhārī has introduced a regular chapter on this subject:

باب من ترك بعض الاختيار مخافة ان يقصر فهم بعض الناس فيقعوا فى اشد منه

> There are occasions when things permissible, even those commendable, are abandoned lest they put common people in misunderstanding - subject to the condition that these acts are not from the core objectives of Islam.

3. But, acts which are included under the objectives of Islam - whether *Farḍ*, *Wājib* or *Sunnah al-Mu'akkadah* (obligatory, necessary or emphasized *Sunnah*) or other kinds of Islamic hallmarks - if by observing them some people lacking in understanding start falling in misunderstanding, then, these acts will not be abandoned, rather, other methods will be used to remove the misunderstanding and misdoing of such people. Events which came to pass in early Islam prove that the disbelievers of Makkah were provoked because of Ṣalāh, the recita-

tion of the Qur'ān and the preaching of Islam. But, the standing hallmarks of Islam were never abandoned because of such adverse conditions. In fact, the very episode relating to Abū Jahl and the rest of Quraysh chiefs recounted under the Background of Revelation of the present verse has proved the point eloquently. The essence of the episode was that the chiefs from the disbelieving Quraysh tribe wished to give a guarantee of peace if the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم would abandon preaching *Tauḥīd*, that is, stop calling Allah One. The answer given by him was: I can never do that, even if they were to bring the sun and the moon and put them in my hands.

In conclusion, the question as refined and resolved is: If, by doing what is included under Islamic objectives, some people fall a victim to misunderstanding or misdeed, such acts would never be abandoned. Of course, acts which are not included under Islamic objectives - and leaving them off does not compromise or kill any religious objective - then, such acts will be abandoned because of the apprehension that others might fall into misunderstanding or misdeed.

On Signs and Miracles

The previous verses had mentioned how obstinate people failed to benefit from clear signs of Allah and open miracles of His Messenger and kept on denying the message of truth. The present verses mention how they took a new turn, and demanded particular miracles from the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم . As reported by Ibn Jarīr, the Quraysh chiefs asked that they be shown the miracle of turning the Mount of Ṣafā into solid gold; if so, they would accept that he was a prophet and messenger, and that they would embrace Islam.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: All right, make a solid agreement that, if this miracle is shown, all of you will become Muslims. They took solemn oaths. The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم stood up to pray that Allah turns the Mount into gold. Sayyidnā Jibra'īl came with Waḥy which said: If you wish, We shall make this whole Mount a Mount of gold, but the consequence will be that, according to the customary Divine Law, all of them - if they still fail to believe - shall be destroyed through a mass punishment, as has been happening with past communities who demanded a miracle which was shown, yet they reverted back to denial when the wrath and punishment of Allah over-

took them. Since the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was aware of their habitual obstinacy, and because he was in mercy the foremost, he said that he was not going to pray for that miracle anymore. Thereupon, the following verse was revealed: وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ (And they swore by Allah on eloquent oaths - 109). Reported here is the sworn saying of the disbelievers that they would embrace Islam if they can see the miracle demanded by them. After that, in the sentence which follows immediately, it was said: إِنَّمَا الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ (Signs are, definitely, with Allah - 109). This contains an answer to their saying. It has been declared here that all signs and miracles are within the power and control of Allah Ta'ālā. As for the miracles already manifested, they too were from Him - and those being demanded now, they too lie within His absolute control. But, according to the dictate of reason and justice, they had no right to make such a demand - because, the Holy Prophet ﷺ claims to be a Messenger of Allah, in support of which, he has already presented proofs and evidences in the form of miracles. Now, the other party does have the right to question these proofs and evidences by showing the proofs of their being false. But, the attitude of not cross-examining evidences presented and yet demanding some other evidences would be like the scenario in a law court where the respondent would avoid cross-examining the witness presented by the plaintiff and take the plea that he does not accept the evidence of these witnesses and that he would accept what is said particularly by such and such a person in his statement. Obviously, no court would consider this plea worth hearing.

Similar is the case of the veracity of a prophet or *Rasūl* of Allah. To that end there are many clear signs and miracles before those who disbelieve. Now, unless they prove that these signs and miracles are false, they have no right to say that they would rather like to see a miracle of this or that kind before they could believe.

After that, upto the end of the cited verses, Muslims have been directly instructed that their duty is to stay firm on the true faith in their individual capacity, as well as convey it to others correctly and properly. If they, even then, show signs of rigidness and obstinacy, one should not worry about them because no one has to be forced into becoming a Muslim. If this was what could be done by force, who can

claim to have greater coercive power than Allah Ta'ālā. He Himself would have made everyone a Muslim. And in order to give Muslims their peace of heart, it was also explained in the verse that these people will not believe even if Allah were to show them the miracles of their choice openly and clearly. The reason was that their denial was not based on any misunderstanding or lack of awareness. In fact, it was due to their hostility and obstinacy - a disease which cannot be treated by miracles. In verse 111: وَلَوْ اَنَّنَا نَزَّلْنَآ اِلَيْهِمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ , it has been said that these people, if they were shown all miracles demanded by them, in fact, even if they were made to meet with angels and talk to the dead, they would still not believe. In the two verses that follow (112-113), the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been comforted by saying that the hostility of such people against him is nothing surprising. Past prophets too had their enemies - so, let him not be sad about it.

Verses 114 - 117

اَفَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ اَبْتَغِىْ حَكَمًا وَّهُوَ الَّذِىْٓ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مُفَصَّلًا ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ يَعْلَمُوْنَ اَنَّهٗ مُنَزَّلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِيْنَ ﴿١١٤﴾ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَّعَدْلًا ؕ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ ﴿١١٥﴾ وَاِنْ تُطِعْ اَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِى الْاَرْضِ يُضِلُّوْكَ عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَاِنْ هُمْ اِلَّا يَخْرُصُوْنَ ﴿١١٦﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَّضِلُّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ۚ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿١١٧﴾

So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge while He has sent down to you the Book with details? And those We have given the Book know that it is something revealed from your Lord with the truth. So, never be one of those who are suspicious. [114]

And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His words, and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. [115]

And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures. [116]

Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path. [117]

Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses was the obstinate attitude of the disbelievers of Makkah against the veracity of the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم. Despite having seen signs and miracles proving their truth, they remained adamant, event went on to demand miracles of their choice before they could believe. The Qur'ān answered this illogical argumentation by saying that the manifestation of miracles they demanded was easy for Allah, but those who were demanding them were obstinate people who would see them yet continue in their wickedness. When they do so, Divine Law will take over, as a result of which, they shall be over-run with mass punishment. That is why the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, in his universal mercy, refused to oblige them. He asked them to ponder over the miracles, signs and proofs they have already seen.

The present verses carry evidences which clearly prove the veracity of the Qur'ān and that it is the Divine Word.

The substance of what has been said in the first verse (114) is: The difference between you and me is in the case of my being a prophet and messenger of Allah. I claim it and you deny it. But, this case has already been decided by the Judge of judges in my favour in a way that the miracle of the Qur'ān itself is more than sufficient a proof of the truth of my claim. This is the same Qur'ān which has challenged the nations of the world to come forward - if they doubt its being the Word of Allah - and make a small *Sūrah* or *'Āyah* to match this Word. Even the eloquent Arabs failed to meet this challenge. Then, there were those opposing Islam, Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam enblock at the cost of their lives, properties and honour, even not one from among them rose with one single *'Āyah* which would match the words of the miraculous Qur'ān. Was this open miracle not good enough to make

one accept the truth that a total *Ummiyy* who was never taught by anyone was reciting what had left Arabia and the world at large wondering? This is a case already decided in the Court of the Judge of all judges - that Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم is a true *Rasūl* of Allah and the Qur'ān is the *Kalām* (Word) of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū.*

It was regarding this that it was said in the first verse (114): أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَمًا (So, is it someone apart from Allah that I should seek as judge). In other words, it means: 'Do you want that I should, after this decision (of Allah Ta'ālā to reveal the Qur'ān to me), go and look for a judge other than Him? This is impossible. Following that - given there are some particular qualities of the Holy Qur'ān which are by themselves the proof of the Qur'ān being true and the Word of Allah. For example, it was said: هُوَ الَّذِي أَنزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا (while He has sent down to you the Book with details) which describes four special perfections of the Qur'ān, that is: (1) It has been sent down from Allah Ta'ālā; (2) It is perfect, miraculous, unchallenged and inimitable; (3) All matters of principle have been given in clear details; and (4) Before the Qur'ān, the People of the Book, the Jews and the Christians knew for sure that the Qur'ān is the true Word of Allah. Then, those who had regard for truth, said so while those who were hostile would not say so despite that they were sure about it.

After the description of these four qualities of the Holy Qur'ān, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم: فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ (So, never be one of those who are suspicious). It means that in the presence of such clear proofs, there is no room for doubt. It is obvious that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was never one of those who were in doubt, nor he could be, as confirmed by his saying reported in *Tafsīr* Ibn Kathir: "Neither I ever doubted, nor I ever asked." This tells us that, though in terms of the words, the address is to the Holy Prophet ﷺ but, in reality, the purpose is to make others hear it. That it has been ascribed to him is a manner in which the aim is to lay emphasis on and highten the effect of the command - in the sense: 'when this has been said to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, who would have the audacity to entertain any doubt?'

Described in the second verse (115), there are two more distinctive qualities of the Holy Qur'ān sufficient to prove its being the Divine

Word. It is said: وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَّ عَدْلًا ۗ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ (And the Word of your Lord is perfect in truth and justice. None is there to change His Word).

The word: تَمَّتْ (*tammat*) denotes the state of perfection and: كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ. (*kalimatu Rabbik*) refers to the Qur'ān (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, from Sayyidnā Qatādah). All subjects of the Qur'ān are of two kinds: (1) Those in which lesson-oriented events and conditions of world history, reward on good deeds and warning of punishment on evil deeds have been described; and (2) those in which injunctions relating to human betterment and prosperity have been laid out. It is about these two kinds that the following two qualities of the Qur'ān have been identified: صِدْقًا وَّ عَدْلًا, that is, perfect in truth and justice. Here, صِدْق (*ṣidq*:truth) belongs to the first kind. It means that all events, conditions, promises or warnings mentioned in the Qur'ān are true and correct. There is no possibility of fault or defect or error in them. And: عَدْل (*'adl*:justice) relates to the other kind, that is, the injunctions (*Aḥkām*). It means that all injunctions of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* are based on *'Adl* (justice). The sense of *'Adl* covers two meanings: (1) Justice under which no injustice has been done to anyone, nor has any right been compromised or usurped; and (2) *I'tidāl* (moderation), that is, not being totally subordinated to the desires of human self, nor being what ingrained human emotions and natural traits cannot bear. This comes to mean that all Divine injunctions are based on justice and moderation, that is, in them, there is no injustice inflicted on anyone, nor do they have hardship and pain which are humanly unbearable - as said elsewhere: لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (Allah does not obligate anyone except to his capacity - 2:286). Then, along with it, by bringing in the word: تَمَّتْ (*tammat*:is perfect), it was also pointed out that the Holy Qur'ān not only has the qualities of truth and justice, but that it is also perfect and complete in them in all respects.

And that all injunctions of the Qur'ān be - for all peoples of the world, for all generations to come and for all changed conditions - based on both justice and moderation is something which, if considered with a little deliberation, can only be possible in nothing but Divine injunctions. No legislative assembly or congress of the world can completely forsee all forthcoming conditions in the present and the future, nor can it make any law which would accomodate all such

conditions. Every country and nation makes its laws keeping in view what are usually the prevailing conditions of that country or nation. Then, even those laws are made to undergo changes when their experience proves that many of their provisions have remained contrary to justice and moderation. Now, to make a master law for other nations and peoples, or to make it with a complete consideration of all future events - that which embodies in it the qualities of justice and moderation for every nation, every country and every condition - is something beyond human thought and perception. This can only be in the Word of Allah *Subḥānuhu wa Ta'ālā*. Therefore, this fifth quality of the Holy Qur'ān, the quality of truth and justice, is impeccable. It demonstrates that all past and present events, promises and warnings, narrated in it are true, wherein the least doubt of their being contrary to the actual cannot be entertained, and that all injunctions given by it are embedded with justice and moderation for the benefit of the whole world for all generations to come right through the Last Day of *Qiyāmah*, injunctions which inflict no injustice on anyone, nor is there the slightest deviation from the norms of moderation and balance. This is, in itself, the perfect proof of the Qur'ān being the Divine Word.

The sixth quality has been identified as: لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمٰتِهٖ that is, there is no one who can change the words of Allah Ta'ālā. One form in which such a change can take place is when someone proves a mistake in it because of which it has to be changed; or, that some enemy changes it forcibly. The Word of Allah is pristinely pure and far beyond any such possibilities. He has Himself promised: اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لَحٰفِظُوْنَ that is, 'We (only We) have revealed the *Dhikr* (the Qur'ān) and, for it, We (only We) are the Protector - 15:9). When so, who can dare break through the protection of Allah and make any changes or alterations in it? For that matter, over fourteen hundred years have passed and there have been, in every century and every age, more people who have been against it as compared in numbers, even in power, with those who have been believing it, but not one of them had the courage to introduce one tiny variance in even a vowel point of the Qur'ān. Of course, possible there was a third form of bringing in a change, that is, it be changed through abrogation (*naskh*) by Allah Ta'ālā Himself. Therefore, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: 'This verse

indicates that the noble Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is the Last Prophet and the Qur'ān, the Last Book. After this, there is no probability of an abrogation' - as it has been elucidated in other verses of the Qur'ān.

At the end of verse (115), it was said: وَهُوَالسَّمِيْعُ الْعَلِيْمُ (and He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing) which means that Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* hears all that is being said by these people and He knows what they do openly and secretly. He will give a return for every deed of theirs in accordance with it.

In the third verse (116), Allah Ta'ālā tells the Holy Prophet ﷺ that the majority of the progeny of 'Ādam living on the earth is in error. Let him not be overawed by this situation and let him ignore what they say or do. The Qur'ān has dealt with this subject at several places. In Sūrah Aṣ-Ṣaaffaat, it is said: وَلَقَدْ ضَلَّ قَبْلَهُمْ اَكْثَرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (And truly before them, many of the ancients went astray (37:71) In Sūrah Yūsuf, it is said: وَمَا اَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِيْنَ (And the majority of people - even if you wish - are not to be believers (12:103). The outcome is that the awe of majority customarily overwhelms an individual and he or she ends up following it. Therefore, the address made to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was:

> 'And if you obey the majority of those on earth, they will make you lose the way of Allah. They follow nothing but whims, and they do nothing but make conjectures.'

The gist of the advice is that he should not be impressed by their numerical majority as a model to follow because they lack principles and go off the right way. At the end of the verse (117), it was said:

> 'Surely, your Lord knows best those who go astray from His way, and He is the best knower of those who are on the right path (consequently, as the errants shall be punished, the people of the straight path shall be rewarded).

Verses 118 - 121

فَكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِاٰيٰتِهٖ مُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١١٨﴾
وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا ذُكِرَاسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ
مَّاحَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ اِلَّا مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ اِلَيْهِ ؕ وَاِنَّ كَثِيْرًا لَّيُضِلُّوْنَ

بِاَهْوَآئِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَاَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۱۱۹﴾ وَذَرُوْا
ظَاهِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهٗ ؕ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يَكْسِبُوْنَ الْاِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا
كَانُوْا يَقْتَرِفُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۰﴾ وَلَا تَاْكُلُوْا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ
وَاِنَّهٗ لَفِسْقٌ ؕ وَاِنَّ الشَّيٰطِيْنَ لَيُوْحُوْنَ اِلٰٓى اَوْلِيٰٓئِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوْكُمْ ۚ
وَاِنْ اَطَعْتُمُوْهُمْ اِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۱﴾

So, eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, if you do believe in His verses. [118]

And what can make you not to eat of that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked, while He has spelled out to you all that He has made unlawful for you, except that to which you are compelled by an extreme necessity? And surely, there are many who misguide with their desires without knowledge. Surely, your Lord is the best knower of those who cross the limits. [119]

And leave sin, the outward and the inward. Surely, those who commit sin shall be punished for what they used to commit. [120]

And do not eat that over which the name of Allah has not been pronounced. This is surely a sin. And the satans inspire their friends to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, you would be Mushriks.* [121]

Linkage of Verses

Earlier (116), by saying: وَاِنْ تُطِعْ (And if you obey), following people in error was prohibited absolutely. Onward from there, comes the prohibition of such following in a particular matter as necessiated by an event. That event pertains to the lawfulness of what has been slaughtered properly or improperly. The event is that disbelievers tried to put Muslims in doubt by commenting that they did not eat of the ani-

*.*Mushrik*: one who ascribes partners to Allah.

mals killed by Allah (i.e. by natural death) while they had no problem with eating of what they killed (slaughtered) themselves (as deduced by Abū Dāwūd and al-Ḥākim from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās). Some Muslims reported this doubt before the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Thereupon, these verses ending at: لَمُشْرِكُونَ (121) were revealed (narrated by Abū Dāwūd and Al-Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās as in Al-Lubāb).

The gist of the answer given is: You are Muslims. You observe the injunctions of Allah particularly - and Allah has told you all about the Ḥalāl and the Ḥarām. So, keep abiding by it. Do not entertain any doubts about something Ḥalāl being Ḥarām, and something Ḥarām, being Ḥalāl. As for the scruples of disbelievers, just pay no attention to them.

The substantiation of this answer is that rational proofs are required only to prove the basic principles of faith (like Oneness of Allah, the prophethood of His messengers etc.) but once these basic principles are established and admitted, rational arguments are no more required for establishing a subsidiary or consequential rule of the Shari'ah. What is required is to prove that this rule is based on a specific order given by Allah or His messenger. Once it is established that the rule is based on a specific injunction imposed by Allah Ta'ālā or His messenger, it cannot be called in question on the basis of rational arguments. (because after admitting that the rule is prescribed by Allah Who is all-Wise, all-Powerful, it will always be based on wisdom which might be unknown to us.) Rather, it is sometimes harmful to mention rational wisdom for the rules of Shari'ah, because any wisdom given by one's conjectures will always remain subject to doubts on the basis of counter arguments, and there is no way to find out a certain and absolute wisdom for a subsidiary rule of Shari'ah. However, if it is evident that a person wants to know the wisdom behind a rule of Shari'ah only to seek truth and to satisfy himself, there is no harm in mentioning some possible reasons of a rule before him as a matter of additional knowledge. But in the event that the rational wisdom is asked only for the sake of confrontation, then the proper way for a Muslim should be to ignore such questions and to act according to the prescribed rules without paying attention to the critic. It is true that if

a person wants to prove that a subsidiary rule of Shari'ah is repugnant to an absolute principle established by reason, the point raised by him may deserve answer, but the question raised by the *mushriks* in the present case was not of this nature in any way. Therefore, the Muslims are directed to ignore such absurd questions and keep believing and acting as before.

It is on the basis of the aforesaid principles that the question of Mushriks has not been answered in express terms. However, the expression used has given a subtle indication to the difference between a carrion and an animal slaughtered properly. The text gives permission to eat an animal on which Allah's name is invoked (كُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ). It is obvious that Allah's name is invoked on an animal while slaughtering it, therefore, it implies the condition of slaughtering an animal which drains out impure blood from the animal. On the other hand, it is forbidden to eat of an animal on which Allah's name is not invoked (وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ). Not invoking Allah's name may happen in two different situations: (1) Not slaughtering an animal at all (2) slaughtering an animal without invoking Allah's name. Both these situations render the animal Ḥarām according to this verse. Obviously, an animal which dies its natural death is covered under the first situation where its impure blood was not drained out and remaining in the body rendered it impure. That is why it has been held as Ḥarām.

Commentary

The Qur'ānic order of reciting the name of Allah implied مَا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ (that upon which the name of Allah has been invoked) includes both kinds of slaughter termed in Islamic Fiqh as "*al-dhabḥ-al-ikhtiyāriyy*" (slaughtering an animal under control) and "*al-dhabḥ-al-iḍṭirāriyy*" (hunting an animal out of control with an arrow or a hunting dog or falcon). The name of Allah shall be recited in the latter case when releasing the arrow or the dog or falcon.

Similarly, the words "مَا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ" include reciting actually or as implied. That is why Imam Abu Hanifah has allowed to eat an animal upon which the reciting of the name of Allah was missed inadvertantly. However if it is missed deliberately, it will render the animal Ḥarām.

Verse 122

أَوَمَن كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنَاهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَمْشِي بِهِ فِي
النَّاسِ كَمَن مَّثَلُهُ فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ
زُيِّنَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him a light with which he walks among men, (is held to) be like the one whose condition is such that he is in total darkness, never coming out of it? This is how their deeds appear beautified to the disbelievers. [122]

Commentary

In the previous verses, mentioned there was the demand of ever new miracles by disbelievers as proof of their sheer obstinacy as they had already witnessed the open miracle of the Qur'ān itself. After that, the Qur'ān argued that the miracles already before their eyes should have been enough to lead them to the true path, only if these people themselves would have been genuinely seeking truth. Then, came the description of these miracles.

The present verse employs a similitude to focus on two life-styles in a tight frame. On one side is the state of those who believe in the Qur'ān and in the Prophet of Islam, may he be blessed and protected by Allah Ta'ālā. Then, on the other side, there is the state of those who refuse to believe in them. Also stated through it is the good or bad end of both, as well as, the reality of what a believer or disbeliever stands for, and what belief and disbelief actually are. A believer is like one alive and the disbeliever is like one who is dead. Belief or *'Īmān* is like light - and Disbelief or *Kufr* is like darkness. These are Qur'ānic similitudes. They are no poetry. They are a statement of reality.

Believer is Alive; Disbeliever, dead.

In this similitude, a *Mu'min*, a true believer has been identified as alive while a *Kāfir*, a disbeliever, has been pointed to as dead. The reason is that kinds and forms of life in human beings, animals and vegetation differ, but this much no sensible person can deny that every life form is there for a specific purpose. And nature has endowed it with

full ability to achieve this purpose. This is what the Qur'ān is saying in: أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ (Our Lord gave everything its creation, then guided it - 20:50), that is: Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhū* created everything in the universe and gave it full instructions to achieve the purpose for which it was created. It is under this arrangement that all created beings are pursuing the mission assigned to them. In this eco-system, land, water, air and fire, and the moon, the sun and the stars are all aware of their duties and are fulfilling it. And this act of fulfilling their duties is a proof of life in all those things. And when one of these, whatever the condition or time, stops fulfilling its duties, then, it is no more alive; it is dead. If water stops its function of quenching thirst and removing impurities, it will not remain water anymore. If fire stops igniting and burning, it will not be the fire it was anymore. Trees and vegetation, once they stop growing and bearing flowers and fruits, will not be the trees and vegetation as they are - because they have abandoned the purpose of their life, as a result of which, they became lifeless, like the dead.

After looking at the universe around him bit by bit, anyone with the least fund of reason and understanding with him is bound to ponder about questions such as: What is the purpose of human life? What is one supposed to do as duty? Now, if one is fulfilling the purpose of one's life, one is entitled to be taken as alive - and whoever is not fulfilling the purpose of one's life, he or she is no better than a dead body.

What is the purpose of human life and what are the duties human beings have to fulfill? The question needs thought and - an answer. According to the principle stated above, it has already been determined that one who is fulfilling the purpose of his or her life is alive, otherwise, is dead. Now there are sightless tyrants among human beings who would take their species as self-rising vegetation or some kind of smart animal, with whom there is no distinction between a human being and a donkey or dog. According to them, the sole purpose of life is to fulfill the desire of one's self, to eat, drink, sleep, wake up, and then die. So, reasonable people anywhere in the world would not take them as their addressees. People of reason and understanding, no matter what their religion, community or school of thought, have all along the lanes of time been in agreement that human beings are the superior-

most in creation and that the universe has been made and put into their service. It is obvious that what is most superior has to have a purpose of life which is matchingly superior. Every discerning person knows that there is no difference between human beings and animals as far as eating, drinking, sleeping and waking, finding and holding a shelter, dressing and wearing is concerned - in fact, many animals eat better and eat more than them, are even dressed better in standard natural attires. They even live in better surroundings with lots of fresh air. As for knowing their gain and loss, there too, every animal, even every tree, has awareness to limits suited to it. They have the ability to acquire the beneficial and stay away from the harmful. Similarly, when it comes to being beneficial to others, all animals and the vegetation seem to be obviously way ahead of human beings in that their flesh, skin, bone, ligaments, and of trees, including all they have in between their roots to the tiniest leaves, almost everything is harnessed into the service of man, yielding countless benefits to produce things needed in life. It is interesting that quite contrary to this, there is man whose flesh is of no use to anyone, nor is his skin, or hair, or bone or ligaments.

Now worth finding out is how does Monseigneur Humane (Mr. Man, the *homo sapiens*), under these circumstances, stand to deserve being the served one in this universe and being the cream of creation as much heralded? This brings us closer to the destination of truth. A little reflection will reveal that the reach of reason and consciousness given to all these units of creation is limited to the transitory and accidental gain or loss - and it is in this life, it appears beneficial for others. What was there before the life on this earth and what will be coming after is a field in which the reason and consciousness of nothing organic or inorganic, not even that of the smartest of animals, would work, nor can anything there serve as functional or beneficial in this particular field. So, this is the field in which human beings have to work, human beings for whom the universe has been commissioned to serve, and human beings who are the most superior of all creation. Only this will bring out the difference between the distinct status of human beings as compared with other elements of creation clearly and conclusively.

What we now know is that the purpose of human beings on this earth is to keep in sight the beginning and the end of this universe, to assess what it entails as a result, to determine what is collectively beneficial or harmful, then use the insight so gained to acquire the beneficial and abstain from the harmful, and also invite others towards the beneficial and take measures to shield them from the harmful - so that the dream of a life of lasting peace and tranquility can be fulfilled. Now that it is settled that the purpose of human life is to acquire this standard benefit issuing forth from human perfection individually and collectively, enriching one's own self and at the same time enriching others. This realization helps us see the similitude of the Holy Qur'ān we have been talking about in the form of a reality - that alive is one who puts his or her faith in Allah Ta'ālā and in His *Rasūl* صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, and in between his or her view of the beginning and end of life, recognizes his collective gain and loss in the light of Divine Revelation, because human reason alone has never truimphed over this field, nor it can. And when we know that, in terms of the fulfillment of the purpose of life, the person alive is the person who follows the Divine Revelation and is a believer, then we also come to the definite conclusion that whoever does not do that deserves to be called dead. Maulanā Rūmī has put it so delightfully:

زندگی از بہر طاعت بندگی است بے عبادت زندگی شرمندگی ست

آدمیت لحم و شحم و پوست نیست آدمیت جز رضائے دوست نیست

Life is to obey and serve
Life without devotion is a shame

Man's reality is not flesh, fat and skin
Man's reality is but the pleasure of the Friend!

This was the first similitude of the Qur'ān, that of a believer and a disbeliever, where believers have been likened to the living and the disbelievers to the dead. The second similitude is that of *'Īmān* (faith) and *Kufr* (disbelief) which have been placed in juxtaposition to light and darkness.

Faith is Light and Disbelief, Darkness

In this verse, *'Īmān* (faith) has been called *Nūr* (light) and *Kufr* (disbelief) has been equated with *Ẓulmah* (darkness). A little thought

will show that this similitude is not imaginary. It is a statement of fact. As we looked for the real purpose of things earlier, we can do the same here by finding out the justification for the existence of light and darkness. The purpose of light is to be able to see things far and near with its help, as a result of which, one has the advantage of staying away from the harmful and the opportunity of acquiring what is beneficial.

Let us now look at '*Īmān*. This is a light which surrounds everything in the heavens and the earth. It is this light alone which can show the end of the universal system as well as the correct consequences of everything done. Whoever has this light by his side, he can not only save himself from the consequences of everything harmful and injurious, but can also help others to stay safe from them. But, one who does not have access to this light remains in the dark. He has no panoramic view. He cannot see life as a whole, neither beginning, nor end. He cannot distinguish between what is beneficial and what is not. At best what he can do is to grope around and use his sense of touch to figure out what they are, at least to some extent. The life of this world as we know it is just about the environment most of us usually live in and around. The disbeliever thus does find out the life around him and the benefit and loss it has to offer within that limited framework. But, he has no idea or awareness of what lies ahead in the eternal life to come later, nor can he comprehend how beneficial or harmful it can be for him. This subject has been further explained by the Qur'ān in Sūrah Ar-Rūm:

يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ

> They know the obvious from the present life of the world while, about the life-to-come ('*Ākhirah*), they are (totally) heedless - 30:7).

In a verse of Sūrah Al-'Ankabūt, after the description of past communities given to denial and disbelief, the Qur'ān says: وَكَانُوْا مُسْتَبْصِرِيْنَ (though they were men of sight - 29-38). It means that these people who had dismissed this matter of '*Ākhirah* demonstrating rank heedlessness and seeming lack of foresight were really not that dense when it came to their matters in worldly life. In fact, they were "*mustabṣirīn*" - keen-sighted, enlightened people. But, this enlightenment of theirs

was outwardly-oriented, of the surface, of the mundane, which could only serve them well to enrich what revolved round their transitory life in this world. However, for the eternal life of *'Ākhirah*, the life-to-come, this was not to work.

After hearing these details, please recite the present verse of the Qur'ān once again: أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنٰهُ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُ نُورًا يَّمْشِىْ بِهٖ فِى النَّاسِ كَمَنْ مَّثَلُهُ فِى الظُّلُمٰتِ لَيْسَ بِخَارِجٍ مِّنْهَا It means that one who was dead earlier, that is, was a disbeliever, then, Allah raised him back to life, that is, gave him the *taufīq* to become a Muslim - and then, He gave him a light, that is, *'Īmān* or faith, with which he moves about among people. Now can this person be equal to one who is surrounded by all sorts of darkness, out of which, he cannot get out, that is, is groping in the darkness of disbelief, does not himself know what is good or bad for him, and there is no way he can ward off his destruction. If so, how can he bring any benefit to others?

The Light of Faith Brings Benefits for Others Too

In this verse, by saying: نُورًا يَّمْشِىْ بِهٖ فِى النَّاسِ (light with which he walks among men), the instruction given was that the light of faith is not restricted to a mosque (*masjid*), spiritual seminary (*khanqāh*) or a modest roomette secluded for reflection and remembrance (*ḥujrah*). Whoever is blessed with this light by Allah Ta'ālā, he carries it with him everywhere he goes through the lives of people on the streets and in the homes. Everywhere he is, he himself benefits from the light and lets others too benefit by it. Light is light and cannot be supressed by any darkness. Even a tiny flickering lamp does not easily give up under the weight of surrounding darkness, though the light it emits does not go very far. When light is strong, it spreads over a larger area. When light is dim, it lightens a smaller area. But light is light. It subdues darkness after all - darkness does not subdue light. Light is not light if it surrenders to darkness. Similarly, an *'Īmān* which surrenders to *Kufr*, or is scared by it, is no *'Īmān*. This light of *'Īmān*, this light of faith is there with its bearer in all walks of life, under all conditions and in every age.

In this similitude, there is yet another hint that light is after all universally beneficial. Every human being and every animal benefits by it, intentionally, or without intention, more or less. Let us suppose

that a person who has the light but does not wish to let the other person benefit from it, nor the other person has come out to seek the benefit of his light, but the very fact that someone is walking with light by his side is bound to spread out its benefit to others naturally, rather compulsively. This is what happens with the *'Īmān* of a true Muslim. It does make its benefit shower on others too, in some degree, whether or not the receivers realize it. At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ زُيِّنَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (This is how their deeds appear beautified to the disbelievers). It means that the disbelievers and deniers of truth who do not accept proofs which are open and clear do so because everyone has a craze of his own which keeps him pleased with himself. There is the ever-present Sahyṭān, and no less is the retinue of one's desires, whims and fancies which present before the eyes of such people a mosaic of their evil deeds which they start seeing as nice and beautiful. Calling it a deception is an understatement. May Allah keep all of us protected from it.

Verses 123 - 125

وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ اَكٰبِرَ مُجْرِمِيْهَا لِيَمْكُرُوْا فِيْهَا ؕ
وَمَا يَمْكُرُوْنَ اِلَّا بِاَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۳﴾ وَاِذَا
جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ حَتّٰى نُؤْتٰى مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ رُسُلُ
اللّٰهِ ؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهٗ ؕ سَيُصِيْبُ الَّذِيْنَ اَجْرَمُوْا
صَغَارٌ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَمْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۴﴾
فَمَنْ يُّرِدِ اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّهْدِيَهٗ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهٗ لِلْاِسْلَامِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ
يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِي السَّمَآءِ ؕ
كَذٰلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۵﴾

And in a similar way, We have made in every town its chief sinners so that they commit mischief in it. And they do not commit mischief but against themselves, and they do not realize. |123|

And when a sign comes to them, they say, "We shall never come to believe unless we are given the like of what was given to the messengers of Allah. Allah

knows best where to place His message. Those who committed sin shall soon suffer from disgrace before Allah and face severe punishment for the mischief they have been making. [124]

So, whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam, and whom He wills to go astray, He makes his heart narrow, much too narrow, as though he climbs up to the sky. In this way, Allah brings ignominy over those who do not believe. [125]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verse was that this world is a place of trial. Good deeds here are tied with some effort. This is a way laid out with hurdles. The same is true about evil deeds. They come with a web of deception laced with unending desires and their short-lived gratifications, a way of living which makes these evil deeds look good in the sight of human beings who are unaware of their reality and heedless to their ultimate end. Such is their pull that the smartest of the smart in this world would not hesitate to jump into the bandwagon.

In the first (123) of the present verses, it is said that this trial can be seen as an ongoing spectacle of life since the beginning of the universe of our existence. Usually, it is the big people of a community, the rich, the influential, the holders of clout and access who, when they get used to the taste of money, power and recognition, start committing crimes in one or the other form, never bothering to reflect on the ultimate end of what they were doing. As for the common people, they become accustomed to following the example set by these big people. They copy them with the conviction that it is good for them and that they are on the obvious road to success. In contrast, there are the blessed prophets and their deputies charged with learning, teaching and preaching. They try to stop people from their evil deeds and warn them of the consequences of what they were doing. Then, these big people open a front of hostility and conspiracy against them, which is obviously to harass or harm these pious souls, but in the ultimate analysis, the curse of what they do against them recoils back on them alone. And this can happen to them even within their life in the present world.

In this statement of guidance, Muslims have been warned against

aspiring to be like the big, the rich, the wealthy of the world. They should leave the habit of looking at them as role-models and stop following them mob-like. For them, the ideal is that they should make a habit of seeing everything in perspective making sure that they are aware of the final end of their deeds, and that they should themselves learn to figure out as to what is good or bad for them.

In addition to that, the purpose here is to comfort the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم when he has been asked not to grieve about the hostility of the chiefs of Quraysh, for it was nothing new. Prophets in the past had also faced such people. But, in the end, they were disgraced and the word of Allah reigned supreme.

In the second verse (124), mentioned there is a conversation relating to the same chiefs of the Quraysh. What they said was a combination of verbal belligerence, sarcasm and mockery. It was answered.

Imām al-Baghawī reports from Sayyidnā Qatādah that Abū Jahl, the big chief of the tribe of Quraysh once said: We have confronted Banū 'Abd Munāf (that is, the family of the Holy Prophet ﷺ) on every front and we have never been behind them. But, now they say: 'you cannot match us in nobility and spiritual greatness because we have a prophet in our family who receives revelation from Allah Ta'ālā.' Then he said: I swear by Allah that we will never follow them unless we too start receiving the kind of revelation he receives. The statement: وَإِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ اٰيَةٌ قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْمِنَ حَتّٰى نُؤْتٰى مِثْلَ مَآ اُوْتِيَ رُسُلُ اللّٰهِ (And when a sign comes to them, they say, "We shall never come to believe unless we are given the like of what was given to the messengers of Allah) at the end of the verse means extactly this.

Prophets and Messengers are appointed by Allah: This Office cannot be acquired or appropriated:

After having reported the statement quoted above, the Qur'ān answers it by saying: اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهٗ (Allah knows best where to place his message). It means that the person making this remark thinks in His ignorance that the station of a prophet and messenger can be acquired on the basis of family nobility, tribal authority and wealth while prophethood is the office of the Vice Regency (*Khilāfah*) of Allah the acquisition of which is in no one's control. No matter how many excellences and perfections one has acquired for himself, still no one can

- through his discretion or control or power of achievement - succeed in acquiring the office and station of prophethood and messengership. That is purely a blessing of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. He bestows it on whomsoever He wills.

This proves that prophethood and messengership are not controlled by human beings. They are not what can be acquired by intellectual perfection or pragmatic excellence or utmost striving or consuming devotion. Even a *waliyy* or saint, no matter how high he may soar in his spiritual station, cannot acquire it. That is nothing but Divine grace as it is given only to particular servants of Allah as dictated by Divine knowledge and wisdom. However, it is necessary that whoever is chosen to occupy this station and office, in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā, is identified right from the beginning when he is created with appropriate inherent ability and then he is specially groomed in his morals and deeds.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: سَيُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ أَجْرَمُوا صَغَارٌ عِندَ اللَّهِ وَعَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا كَانُوا يَمْكُرُونَ (Those who committed sin shall soon suffer from disgrace before Allah and face severe punishment for the mischief they have been making). Here, the word: صَغَار (*ṣaghār*) is a verbal noun which means disgrace. The sentence means that these antagonists of truth who are known to be the big chiefs of their people will see their pride and prestige rolling in dust. Disgrace is coming; so is punishment - and both are grim. That can be within the life of the present world, and in the *'Ākhirah* as well - as has been the fate of the oppressors of the prophets in the past who were put to disgrace in the present world as well. The topmost antagonists of our own Prophet, may the blessing of Allah and peace be upon him, who boasted about their prestige, either entered the fold of Islam or, as was the case with those who did not, were destroyed in disgrace. What happened to the legendary chiefs of Quraysh, Abū Jahl and Abū Lahb, became a lesson when the Conquest of Makkah broke their backs.

Signs of '*Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*' in *Dīn*

Some signs of the Divinely-guided, and the firm on error, have been given in the third verse (125). Said there was: فَمَن يُرِدِ اللَّهُ أَن يَهْدِيَهُ يَشْرَحْ صَدْرَهُ لِلْإِسْلَامِ (So, whom Allah wills to give guidance, He opens his heart for Islam).

Ḥākim in al-Mustadrak and Baihaqī in Shu'ab al-'Īmān report from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ: When this verse was revealed, the Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم requested him to explain the meaning of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*, the opening of the heart for Islam. He said: 'Allah Ta'ālā puts a light in the heart of a believer through which his heart opens up for the perception, understanding and acceptance of truth. The *Ṣaḥābah* submitted: 'Is there a sign which will help recognize the person who has such *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*? He said: 'Yes. The sign is that *'Ākhirah* and its blessings become the object of all his desires. He avoids uncalled-for desires and fleeting enjoyments and starts getting ready for death before it comes.'

After that, he said: " وَمَنْ يُّرِدْ اَنْ يُّضِلَّهٗ يَجْعَلْ صَدْرَهٗ ضَيِّقًا حَرَجًا كَاَنَّمَا يَصَّعَّدُ فِى السَّمَاۗءِ " (and whom He wills to let go astray, He makes his heart narrow, much too narrow [wherefore, for him to accept the truth and to act in accordance with it becomes as difficult], as though he climbs up to the sky).

Kalabi has said: 'the narrowing of his heart means that no passage for the entry of truth and good remains open there.' A similar explanation has also been reported from Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam رضی اللہ عنہ and Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said: 'When he hears the *Dhikr* of Allah, he feels being harassed and when he listens to what is *Kufr* and *Shirk*, his heart relishes it.'

The Noble *Ṣaḥābah*: Ever-Eager Receivers of Truth

This was the reason why the noble *Ṣaḥābah*, may Allah be pleased with all of them, who were chosen by Allah Ta'ālā to be His Prophet's companions in faith, and to be the learners and carriers of his teachings as his direct disciples. They were so convinced as his adherents that their doubts about Islamic injunctions, if any, remained negligibly low. During their whole lifetime, the number of questions presented before the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم by them are but a counted few. The reason was that by the grace of the company of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم their hearts were almost engraved with love and reverence for Allah Ta'ālā and because of which they were blessed with the high station of *Sharḥ al-Ṣadr*, a heart open to the acceptance of truth. In fact, their hearts had become in themselves the very standard of truth and falsehood. They would accept truth promptly and falsehood could not find entry into their hearts. After that, as the distance from

the blessed period of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم increased, doubts and scruples started finding room for infilteration and that was the beginning of dogmatic differences.

To Remove Doubts : Open Hearts, Narrow Debates

In our day, the world is a stage infested with doubts. People seek solutions through debates, arguments and counter-arguments and end up with confusion worse confounded. This is not a sound way to handle doubts as pointed out by the unique Indian poet, Akbar Ilāhābadī:

فلسفی کو بحث کے اندر خدا ملتا نہیں ڈور کو سلجھا رہا ھے پر سرا ملتا نہیں

The philosopher deep in debate cannot find God
He is untangling the string but cannot find where to begin!

There is only one way out, that which was taken by the blessed Companions and by the early righteous elders: Think of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā and imagine His blessings and feel the presence of His love and reverence, the doubts evaporate automatically. This is the reason why the Qur'ān has itself prompted the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to make the following *Du'ā* (prayer):

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِىْ صَدْرِىْ

Rabbishraḥ lī ṣadrī

O my *Rabb*, open my heart.

At the end of the verse it was said: كَذٰلِكَ يَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ الرِّجْسَ عَلَى الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ which means that this is how Allah brings damnation and disgrace upon those who do not believe. For truth, their hearts are not open while to every evil they dash.

Verses 126 - 128

وَهٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا ؕ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ
﴿١٢٦﴾ لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٢٧﴾ وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا ۚ يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ قَدِ
اسْتَكْثَرْتُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ ۚ وَقَالَ اَوْلِيٰٓـؤُهُمْ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ رَبَّنَا اسْتَمْتَعَ
بَعْضُنَا بِبَعْضٍ وَّبَلَغْنَآ اَجَلَنَا الَّذِيْٓ اَجَّلْتَ لَنَا ؕ قَالَ النَّارُ

مَثْوٰىكُمْ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ

﴿۱۲۸﴾

And this is the path of your Lord, a straight path. We have made the verses elaborate for people who accept the advice. [126] **For them there is the Abode of Peace with their Lord, and He is their Guardian by virtue of what they used to do.** [127]

And the day He gathers all of them together: "O Jinn-kind, you have done too much against mankind." And their friends from among the human beings will say, "Our Lord, some of us have benefitted from some others, and we have reached our term You had appointed for us." He will say, "The Fire is your Abode where you will remain for ever, except what Allah wills. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing." [128]

Commentary

In the first (126) of the three verses appearing here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and it has been said: وَهٰذَا صِرَاطُ رَبِّكَ مُسْتَقِيْمًا (And this is the path of your Lord, a straight path). Here, as said by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, the word: هذا (*hādhā*:this) refers to the Qur'ān, and as said by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, it means Islam (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī). The sense of the sentence is: This Way is the Way of your Lord, that is, this is a Way which has been proposed by your Lord in His infinite Wisdom, and with Him it finds favour. Here, by attributing the Way to the Lord of all, it has been indicated that the working system of Qur'ān and Islam given to him was not for the benefit of Allah Ta'ālā, rather, it was for the benefit of those who would act in accordance with it. This is as required by His being the *Rabb*, the Supreme Nurturer. Through this Way, the purpose is to nurture, train and groom human beings in a manner which would guarantee their eternal well-being.

Then, by bringing in the word: رب (*Rabb*:Lord) in a state of attribution to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, that is: ربك (*Rabbik*:your Lord), the impression of a special kindness towards him has been released - that: 'your' Lord has proposed this Way. The delicacy of this attribu-

tion can be readily felt by people of taste. Think of a servant of Allah. If he ever happens to find his person placed in even the minor-most frame of reference to his *Rabb* and *Maʿbūd*, his Lord and the object of his worship and devotion, that would be, for him, the highest possible achievement. And now, if the Lord of lords, the One worship-worthy entity in this whole universe, were to attribute His pristine Person to him and say, "I am yours," what remains there for him to say anything anymore about his wonderful 'kismet!'

After that, the 'existing identity' of this Qur'ānic Way has been explained through the word: مُسْتَقِيمًا (*mustaqīm*), that is, this path is the straight path. Here too, rather than have '*mustaqīm*' (straight) as the adjective of '*ṣirāt*' (path), it has been placed as an adverb which indicates that the Way has been proposed by the Lord of the universe, and in this, any probability, other than its being straight, just cannot exist. (Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī and Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ)

The text then says: قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ (We have made the verses elaborate for people who accept the advice).

The word: 'فَصَّلْنَا' (*Faṣṣalnā*: We have made elaborate) is from: تَفْصِيل (*tafṣīl*) which basically means to describe a subject by analysing it unit by unit. This way comprehending the subject becomes easy. Therefore, the outcome of *tafṣīl* is to explain explicitly. So, the sense comes to be: 'We have stated matters of principle explicitly and in details in which there remains no brevity or ambiguity.' After that, by saying: لِقَوْمٍ يَّذَّكَّرُوْنَ (for people who accept the advice), it was pointed out that, though these statements of the Qur'ān are clear, but benefit from them has been derived only by those who ponder over the Qur'ān to seek good counsel honestly, that is, doggedness, inherent resistence, opinionatedness, a priori hostility or the barriers of blind adherence to or following of ancestral customs do not come in between as walls.

In the second verse (127), it was said: لَهُمْ دَارُ السَّلٰمِ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ (For them there is the Abode of Peace with their Lord). It means that the people who have been mentioned above, people who see and hear the Qur'ānic words of advice with an open mind and who, as an inevitable result, accept the advice and guidance, then, it is for them that there is that reward of *Dārus-Salām*, present and preserved, waiting. Here, the

word: دَار (*dār*) means home or abode and: سَلَام (*salām*) means peace and security from all calamities, catastrophes and hardships. Therefore, *Dārus-Salām* can be the description of a home where none of these, or sorrow or pain of any kind, can find entry. And that, as obvious, could only be Paradise.

And Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: *Salām* is the name of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. And the *Dār* of *As-Salām* means the '*Dār*' (home, house or abode) of Allah. It is evident that the abode of Allah is a place of peace. Therefore, the meaning essentially remains the same, that is, a home where total and all-inclusive peace reigns. By calling *Jannah* (Paradise) *Dārus-Salām*, the indication given is that *Jannah* alone is the place where one sheds off all pain, anxiety and distaste, and enjoys total bliss, something never acquired by the highest of the high in this mortal world, nor even by the greatest of the great prophets or messengers - because this state of life in the mortal world is not the proper locale of perfect and eternal peace and pleasure.

It has been stated in this verse that, for those who have the good fortune of accepting the advice, there is '*Dārus-Salām*' with their Lord. Now, the expression - 'with their Lord' - could also mean that this '*Dārus-Salām*' cannot be cashed instantly here in the mortal world, rather, they will get it when they go to their Lord on the Day of *Qiyāmah*. And it could also mean that the promise of '*Dārus-Salām*' cannot be false. The most gracious *Rabb* is its guarantor. It lies safe with Him. Then, right here, there is yet another indication towards the fact that no one can ever imagine the blessings of this '*Dārus-Salām*' within the limitations of this frame of existence. Only the *Rabb*, with whom lies this treasure, knows it.

Moreover, in the light of the second meaning given above, the actual getting of this '*Dārus-Salām*' does not seem to hinge upon the coming of *Qiyāmah* (The Last Day) and '*Ākhirah* (Hereafter). In fact, it is also possible that the most gracious *Rabb* would make anyone He wills its fortunate recepient within the life of this world - whether by making them totally immune to and protected against all calamities and hardships, as has been the case is some examples of past prophets and men of Allah, or, by making the blessings of the '*Ākhirah* appear before

their eyes with a touch of the real, their very eyes were attuned to the real thing in a manner that it helped them perceive the pains of the transitory world as something insignificant and not worthy of much notice. For such people, even stockpiles of suffering are reduced to a blade of grass.

That the forthcoming rewards to be received as against the hardships of the mortal world would make them welcome these hardships as something delectable is not a proposition too far out. Think of the eternal blessings of the *'Ākhirah*. They are certainly great as they can be. Then, think of the fleeting comforts of this mortal world. Their very thought thrills. Man slaves for them, yet takes his slavery with a smile and a sigh of relief. Man sacrifices the bliss of his freedom and exchanges it with worldly comforts through recommendations and bribes, goes for the hard labour of job or work which cuts through his sleep and rest, even does it with zest and enthusiasm, and then, is happy and grateful about it - because he sees before his eyes the passage of thirty one days of the month which will bring to him the taste and pleasure of the salary he has earned. That pleasure makes every bitterness of this slavery in work tasteful and pleasing. According to one of the possible explanations (Tafsīr) of the Qur'ānic verse: وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ جَنَّتٰنِ, those who fear Allah Ta'ālā shall have two Paradises, the one in the *'Ākhirah* and the other in the mortal world. To begin with, Paradise in the world means that one finds the help of Allah with him in everything he does. What he does seems to be becoming easy for him - and, even if he has to face a passing phase of difficulty, extra-effort, or even failure, that appears welcome to him in anticipation of the lasting blessings of the *'Ākhirah*, something which turns even this painful experience into a state of comfort.

To sum up, it can be said that the reference in this verse, of '*Dārus-Salām*' for good people being with their *Rabb*, is a promise which is certain and determined for the *Akhirah*, and it is also possible that they may be given a taste of the '*Dārus-Salām*' in this world as well.

At the conclusion of the verse (127), it was said: وَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ (and He is their Guardian by virtue of what they used to do). It means that, because of their good deeds, Allah Ta'ālā becomes their guardian, care-taker and helper. Everything hard they face becomes easy on

them.

Mentioned in the third verse (128) is a dialogue before a gathering of Jinns and human beings on the plains of the Resurrection (*Al-Ḥashr*). Allah Ta'ālā will address the satans among Jinns telling them about their excessive role in misleading human beings. What would they say in reply has not been mentioned by the Qur'ān. As obvious, there was not much they could do but to confess the truth before the All-Knowing and the All-Aware. But, in not mentioning their confession, the hint given is that they will be so confounded with the question that they would not know how to make an answer. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After that, the text turns to the satans among human beings, that is, those who followed the instigations of satans during their life of the world, went astray themselves, and kept becoming the cause of others going astray. It is from them that an answer submitted in the court of the Judge of all judges has been mentioned - though, the inital question was not asked of the satans of human beings, but in an implied manner, they too were the addressees, because they too had done the same job of making people go astray as was the job of the satans of the Jinn. Thus, their reply was based on their being the implied addressees. But, it seems obvious that the human-like satans too are liable to be questioned which, though, is not mentioned here explicitly. However, it does find mention in a verse of Sūrah Yā Sīn, which is: أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَٰبَنِيٓ ءَادَمَ أَن لَّا تَعْبُدُوا۟ ٱلشَّيْطَٰنَ that is, 'had I not taken a pledge from you, O children of Ādam (through messengers), that you shall not obey the Shaytan? - 36:60).

From this we know that human satans too will be subjected to the question on this occasion and they would, in reply, confess that, surely, they committed that crime and that they listened to the satans, and they would also confess that, surely, the two of them benefitted from each other through their friendship and cooperation. The human satans learned from them the ways of securing gratification from worldly enjoyments and, on occasions, called on them for help in one or the other way, as is the practice in idol-worshipping Hindus and, for that matter, even among ignorant Muslims, who would practice methods through which the help of satans and jinns can be harnessed in some tasks. As for the satans among Jinns, their gain was that they found a

pliable people to listen to them because of which they succeeded in making human beings follow their dictates, so much so that they forgot all about death and the Hereafter. That was when they confessed that they had forsaken the thought of death and the Hereafter because of the instigation of satans, and now they see it in front of them. Thereupon, Allah Ta'ālā will say: اَلنَّارُ مَثْوٰىكُمْ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّا مَاشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ حَكِيْمٌ عَلِيْمٌ ("The Fire is your abode where you shall remain for ever, except what Allah wills [that is, wills to take someone out of it]. Surely, your Lord is All-Wise, All-Knowing"). But, as in the definitive statements of the Qur'ān (*Nuṣūṣ*), it stands proved that even Allah Ta'ālā would not so will, therefore, it is for ever that they shall have to be in it.

Verses 129 - 132

وَكَذٰلِكَ نُوَلِّيْ بَعْضَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بَعْضًا ۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿۱۲۹﴾ يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ وَيُنْذِرُوْنَكُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ؕ قَالُوْا شَهِدْنَا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۱۳۰﴾ ذٰلِكَ اَنْ لَّمْ يَكُنْ رَّبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرٰى بِظُلْمٍ وَّاَهْلُهَا غٰفِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۱﴾ وَلِكُلٍّ دَرَجٰتٌ مِّمَّا عَمِلُوْا ؕ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳۲﴾

And thus We set some wrongdoers on some others because of what they used to commit. [129]

"O Jinnkind and mankind, have there not come to you the messengers from among you who used to narrate My verses to you, and used to warn you of your meeting this day?" They will say, "We testify against ourselves." And the worldly life had deceived them, and they testified against themselves that they were disbelievers. [130]

And this is because your Lord is not to destroy any towns for any injustice while their people are unaware. [131]

And for all there are ranks according to what they did, and your Lord is not unaware of what they do. [132]

Commentary

Lexically, the word: نُوَلِّي (*nuwallī*) appearing in the first (129) of the three verses cited above can be translated either in the sense of joining up and bringing closer, or in the sense of setting on or imposing on. Narrations reported from leading authorities in *Tafsīr* among the Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn also carry the explanation of this word as based on these two meanings.

The Basis of Human Groupings after Resurrection

Early authorities Sa'īd ibn Jubayr and Qatādah and others have taken the first sense and, according to them, the verse means that, on the day of *Qiyāmah* before Allah Ta'ālā, the collective formations - that is, groupings and party alignments of people - will not be on racial or national or colour and language basis, instead of which, these groupings shall be on the basis of deeds and morals. A Muslim obedient to Allah Ta'ālā, wherever he may be, shall be together with Muslims; and the disobedient disbeliever, wherever he may be, shall be together with disbelievers - whether their race, heredity, country, language, colour and social living may be way different.

Then, even among Muslims, those good in deeds shall be with the righteous while the evil doers will be grouped up with evil doers and sinners. This is the sense of what has been said in Sūrah At-Takwīr: وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ that is, when people shall be grouped (like with like) the sense of which is that the people gathered before Allah Ta'ālā on the plains of Resurrection shall split in different groupings in terms of their deeds and morals.

In his *Tafsīr* of this verse, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam has said: 'The doers of one kind of deeds, good or bad, shall be grouped together. The good will go with the good to *Jannah* and the evil will be led with the evil to *Jahannam*.' To authenticate his explanation, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam cited proof from the verse: أُحْشُرُوا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا وَأَزْوَاجَهُمْ of the Holy Qur'ān (37:22) which deals with the same subject by saying that, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, the command will go forth: 'Gather those who have been unjust, and their cohorts, (and take them to *Jahannam*).

The gist of the explanation of this verse is that Allah Ta'ālā will, by merging some of the unjust with some others, will make them one group, irrespective of how far apart they may be from each other in terms of their race and homeland.

In addition to what has been stated above, it has also been clarified in another verse that, on the fateful day of Resurrection, the temporal grouping based on race, country, colour, language and other unifiers will break up root and branch: وَيَوْمَ تَقُوْمُ السَّاعَةُ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَفَرَّقُوْنَ . It means: When the Hour (of *Qiyāmah*) is established, those united shall stand separated - 30:14).

Deeds and Morals affect Collective Matters even in this World

As for the severence of existing relations and affiliations, that is something which will come before everyone fully and clearly after all, but a minor sampling of this can be found everywhere in this mortal world as well. It goes without saying that a good person is temperamentally tuned to virtues and virtuous people. He is attached to them individually or collectively. This becomes his passport to ever-new avenues of good deeds which go on to make his determination firm. The same holds for doers of evil deeds. They too relate to their kind; to them they are attached and with them they keep company. And this negative company keeps contributing to their evil deeds and evil morals, as a result of which, avenues of good and prospects of better conduct keep closing on him before his own eyes. This is his cash punishment for his evil deeds which he gets right here in this world.

So, in a nutshell, we can say that there is a reward or punishment of good or bad deeds which will come in the '*Ākhirah* and there is a reward or punishment which comes within the life of this world in a way that a good person is blessed with colleagues who are equally good and honest and whose contribution to whatever is undertaken makes them rise and prosper together. In contrast, there is the person with evil deeds and evil intention who gets what he deserves. The colleagues he gets and the help and assistance he employs are no different than him. What is left of his misfortune, the evil group around him takes care of that when it pushes him into a far deeper abyss.

As mentioned earlier, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with a ruler, He gives him good ministers and

good staff who make his government well-managed and progress-prone - and when Allah Ta'ālā is displeased with someone, he gets colleagues who are bad and so are the officials he must deal with. As a result, even if he wishes to do something good, he cannot get it done.

An oppressor is punished at the hands of another oppressor

The sense of the verse given above is in terms of its translation according to the first meaning mentioned earlier. As for the second meaning mentioned alongside, reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Zubayr رضی اللہ عنہ, Sayyidnā ibn Zayd رضی اللہ عنہ, Mālik ibn Dinār and others is a *Tafsīr* according to which, 'Allah Ta'ālā sets some unjust people (*Ẓālim*) over other unjust people and thus has one *Ẓālim* (oppressor) punished at the hands of another *Ẓālim*.'

This approach to meaning is also correct and sound in its place, and is in accord with other statements of the Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth*. The Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said in a *Ḥadīth*: كَمَا تَكُوْنُوْنَ كَذٰلِكَ يُؤَمَّرُ عَلَيْكُمْ that is, as you shall be, so shall be the rulers set on you. If you are unjust and evil, your rulers will also be unjust and evil. And if you are good in your deeds and characters, Allah Ta'ālā will make good, kind and just people your rulers.

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says: When Allah Ta'ālā wishes well for a people, He appoints the best rulers and officials for them - and when He wishes otherwise for a people, He sets the worst rulers and officials over them. (Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

According to Ruḥ al-Ma'ānī, it is on the authority of this verse that Muslim jurists prove that: When people of a country, turn away from Allah Ta'ālā and become involved in deeds of injustice and oppression, Allah Ta'ālā sets oppressive rulers and officials over them and lets them be punished at their hands.

Based on a narration by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ, Ibn Kathīr has reported a decisive statement of the Holy Prophet ﷺ: مَنْ اَعَانَ ظَالِمًا سَلَّطَهُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ that is, whoever helps a *Ẓālim* (oppressor) in his *Ẓulm*, (injustice) then Allah Ta'ālā sets that very *Ẓālim* on him to torment him, and it is at his hands that he gets his punishment.

Mentioned in the second verse (130), is a question which will be asked of the Jinn and human beings on the plains of Resurrection.

They will be asked to show the reason why they chose to disbelieve and disobey Allah Ta'ālā. They were told that they could not deny that Divinely ordained messengers from among them did reach them, messengers who recited to them the verses of Allah and warned them of that day of reckoning. In the reply to this question, mentioned there is their confession that the messengers did come, they did tell them the truth, and that they were involved with disbelief and disobedience. But, no reason for this wrongdoing was given from their side. Instead, Allah Ta'ālā has Himself given its reason by saying: وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا (And the worldly life had deceived them). It means that the charms of their transitory life had put them on the wrong track. They thought that it was everything, which was really nothing, and that made them heedless to their end.

There is something noteworthy here. There are other verses in the Qur'ān which say that the disbelievers will deny their *Kufr* and *Shirk* when asked to explain it on the day of Resurrection and before their Lord, they would lie by saying: وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ that is, 'we swear by Allah, our Lord, we were no *mushriks* (of those who ascribe partners to Him).' Now, this verse tells us that they would be ashamed of their *Kufr* and *Shirk* and will confess their error. On the outside, this seems to be contradictory. But, there are further explanations in other verses of the Qur'ān that they would initially deny when asked, but, when Allah Ta'ālā - in His perfect power - would make them speechless, witnesses will come from different parts of their own body. Then, Allah will give them their speech back and they will tell everything about their misdeed openly and clearly. Then, the Jinn and human beings will find out that all parts of their body were really the private eyes of the created system which finally produced the true evidence on everything about them. Then, left with no choice to deny, they will confess.

Are there messengers of Allah among the Jinn too?

Something else to be considered here is that, in this verse, Allah Ta'ālā has addressed both Jinnkind and mankind and asked them about messengers (*rasūl*) coming to them, messengers of Allah who were from among them. This shows that messengers have been sent to the Jinnkind from among their own kind - as is the case with humankind among whom the messengers were sent from among them, that

is, they were human beings.

On this question, the *'Ulamā'* of *Tafsīr* and *Ḥadīth* differ. Some say that *Rasūl* (messenger) and *Nabiyy* (prophet) have always been human. There has been no *Rasūl* appointed directly from among the Jinn-kind. Instead, what has happened is that there have been Jinns charged with the mission of getting reports of the message of truth conveyed by human prophets and messengers and take it to their kind. They were really, in that way, couriers and message-bearers of a *Rasūl*. Therefore, they too are called *rasūl* or carrier of a message, within the literal sense of the word in Arabic. The proof of the position taken by these respected scholars comes from the verses of the Qur'ān where sayings of the Jinn that they conveyed the Qur'ān or the saying of the prophet to their kind have been mentioned, for example: وَلَّوْا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِم مُّنذِرِينَ (... and they returned to their people to warn them - 46:29), and in the verse of Sūrah Al-Jinn: فَقَالُوٓا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْءَانًا عَجَبًا . يَهْدِىٓ إِلَى ٱلرُّشْدِ فَـَٔامَنَّا بِهِۦ (... they said: Indeed, we have heard a wonderful Qur'ān that leads to rectitude, so in it we believe - 72:1).

But, there is a group of *'Ulamā'* who, given the outward meaning of this verse, also believe that, before the appearance of the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم, each of the two species had their messengers from among them. To human beings came messengers who were human beings, and to the different classes of the Jinn, messengers were sent from among their kind only. It is the distinction of the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم that he was sent as the only *Rasūl* for all human beings and the Jinn of the whole world - and that too was not limited for one given time - in fact, all human beings and the Jinn born right up to the Last Day of *Qiyāmah* shall be his community and he alone shall be the *Rasūl* and *Nabiyy* for them.

Related Notes on Hindu Autars

Leading scholars of *Tafsīr*, Kalābi and Mujāhid hold that the Autārs of Hindus are generally from the Jinns. Qaḍī Thana'ullah of Pānīpat, in his *Tafsīr* Maẓharī, has followed this view. According to him, it proves that, before Sayyidnā Ādam عليه السلام, the messengers of the Jinn used to be from their kind only. Then, it is proved that the Jinn inhabited the earth thousands of years before human beings - and since they too are obligated to observe the percepts of the injunctions of the Sha-

rī'ah like human beings, it is necessary on the basis of reason and revelation that they too should have prophets and messengers among them in order to convey the commandments of Allah Ta'ālā.

Qaḍī Thanā'ullah Pānīpatī has said that the Hindus of India claim the history of their Vedas as thousands of years old. According to them their religious deities they called Autār date back to the same early time. It is not far out to say that they may be these very prophets and messengers of the Jinnkind, and may be the instructions brought by them were put together in the form of some book. The images and idols of Autars of Hindus placed in temples have particular patterns. Some are represented with several faces, others with many hands and feet, while still others would have other features such as a trunk like that of an elephant. They are very different from common human shapes. That the Jinn could transform themselves into such shapes is not beyond the range of probability. Therefore, saying that their Autar might be the prophets, messengers or their deputies who came to serve the Jinnkind - and their book itself be the collection of their instructions - is not so far out either. Then, gradually, as there were alterations in other books, alterations were made here too and what was left of it was idolatory and *Shirk*.

However, even if that original book and the authentic instructions left by those messengers were present, they would have stood abrogated after the appearance of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, and the universal application of his prophethood. And that it would have become impossible to act in accordance with it after its having been deformed and altered is something evident by itself.

The third verse (131) tells us that sending prophets and messengers among human beings and the Jinn is based on the dictate of justice and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā for He does not send punishment over a people unless they have been awakened through His blessed messengers and provided with the light of guidance.

The sense of the fourth verse (132) is fairly clear. It says that with Allah there are ranks for classes of people among human beings and the Jinn. These ranks have been assigned in terms of their deeds. When rewarded or punished, the measure used shall be that of their deeds.

Verses 133 - 136

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ۚ إِنْ يَّشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْ
بَعْدِكُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُ كَمَآ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ ﴿١٣٣﴾ إِنَّ
مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَاٰتٍ ۙ وَّمَآ أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ ﴿١٣٤﴾ قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا
عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّيْ عَامِلٌ ۚ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهُ
عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٥﴾ وَجَعَلُوْا لِلّٰهِ مِمَّا ذَرَاَ
مِنَ الْحَرْثِ وَالْاَنْعَامِ نَصِيْبًا فَقَالُوْا هٰذَا لِلّٰهِ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَهٰذَا
لِشُرَكَآئِنَا ۚ فَمَا كَانَ لِشُرَكَآئِهِمْ فَلَا يَصِلُ إِلَى اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَا كَانَ
لِلّٰهِ فَهُوَ يَصِلُ إِلٰى شُرَكَآئِهِمْ ۚ سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُوْنَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

And your Lord is the All-Independent, the Master of Mercy. If He wills, He shall take you away and shall bring after you whom He wills just as He has raised you from the progeny of other people. [133]

Surely what you are promised is bound to come, and you cannot frustrate (it). [134]

Say, "O my people, do at your place (whatever you do) I am to do (in my way). So, you will know for whom is the ultimate abode. Surely, the unjust shall not be successful. [135]

And they have assigned a portion for Allah from what He has created from the tillage and the cattle, and they said, "This is for Allah" so they claimed - "and this is for our associate-gods." Then, what was for their associate-gods never reaches Allah, and what was for Allah does reach their associate-gods. Evil is what they judge. [136]

Commentary

Stated in previous verses was that Allah Ta'ālā has always been sending His messengers and the rules of conduct required by Him to every set of people among the Jinn and the human beings and, unless they were fully warned through their messengers, punishment was never given to them for their disbelief and disobedience.

In the first (133) of the four verses cited above, it has been pointed out that the practice of sending messengers and scriptures was not there because the Lord of the universe needed our obedience and worship, or some task of His depended on our obedience. No, this was never so. He is absolutely All-Independent, and need-free. But, alongwith His perfect freedom from dependence and need, there is that attribute of mercy in Him. See how He brings the entire universe into existence, then He maintains it and keeps fulfilling all outward and inward, present and future needs of everyone and everything. The cause is this very attribute of mercy. Otherwise, human beings, being what they are, would have hardly been able to produce what they needed, not to say much about their lack of etiquette in how to ask for what they need. This is particularly true about the very blessing of existence. That it has been bestowed without asking is all too clear. No human being anywhere has prayed to be born - nor can praying before coming into existence be imagined. Similarly, there are the limbs of the human body which go in the creation of a living body - the eyes, ears, hands, feet, the heart and the brain. Were they asked for by any human being? Or, did one of them had the consciousness and etiquette to ask for them? Nothing of the sort is true. The truth is: we were not there, we did not ask - it was His mercy hearing the unsaid!

Allah is All-Independent and His Creation is only a Mirror of His Mercy

In this verse, the words: رَبُّكَ الْغَنِيُّ describe how absolutely free from and independent of need the Lord of all lords is. But, by adding the words: ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ soon after, it was pointed out that, though He needs none, depends on none, is independent of everyone and everything in the universe, and the universe itself, yet, alongwith all that, He is also the one who has mercy and dispenses it at will.

Allah, in His Wisdom, Made no Human Being Need-Free - If So, Man Turns To Tyranny

It is certainly a great blessing of Allah, otherwise human beings have their own ways of neglect. When they become free from needs and independent of circumstancial compulsions, they stop caring for the benefit or loss and the sorrow or comfort of others. In fact, what usually happens under such situations is that one becomes all the

more adamant on inflicting injustice and oppression against others. Says a verse of the Holy Qur'ān: إِنَّ الْإِنسَانَ لَيَطْغَىٰ أَن رَّآهُ اسْتَغْنَىٰ (96:6), that is, when human beings find themselves need-free and independent, they are ready to rebel and transgress. Therefore, Allah Almighty has made man so tied up with needs which cannot be fulfilled without the help of others. A king needs his retinue of liveries, the wealthy man needs his help, the industrialist depends on his labour. The driver of a passenger vehicle comes out on the streets to earn his living of the day while one who can afford to pay for the ride has to hail for one. Nature has chained them together. Each needs the other and no one is doing any favour. Without this arrangement, no rich man will pay a dime to anyone and no handyman or porter would care to carry someone else's burden. So, all this is a manifestation of the most perfect attribute of Allah Ta'ālā who is All-Independent, yet the Master of Mercy. The text could have used a single word form such as *Ar-Rahman* (All-Merciful) or *Ar-Raḥīm* (Very-Merciful) and that would have served the purpose of describing the mercy of Allah. But, the choice of a compound form: ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ (*Dhur-Raḥmah*:The Master of Mercy) has been preferred because it shows the correlation between the two attributes of Allah Ta'ālā described in the verse. He is All-Independent, yet He is the master-dispenser of mercy - an attribute which is the real cause of sending messengers and books for the good of human beings.

After that, it was also made clear that the way His mercy is universal and perfect, in the same way His power holds control over everything. If He wills, He could undo everyone in a moment - and even this undoing of the entire creation would not cause the slightest difference to the working of His power. Then, if He wills to undo the present system of the entire universe and replace it with another set of creation in the same manner and at the same time - He can certainly do that. An evidence of this possible happening always remains before human beings of all ages. Think of the millions of human beings who inhabit the near and far corners of the earth and run the business of their lives, then think of the time a hundred years earlier. You shall realize that the earth was inhabited as it is now, and things were going on as usual, but none of the present inhabitants of the earth, the movers and shakers of things, were there. What was there was a different set of people - and that different set of people lies buried under

the earth with no traces to be found today. The people on the earth today are the descendants of the earlier generation of people. Says the Qur'ān: إِنْ يَّشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِكُمْ مَّا يَشَآءُ كَمَآ أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُرِّيَّةِ قَوْمٍ اٰخَرِيْنَ (If He wills, He shall take you away and shall bring after you whom He wills just as He has raised you from the progeny of other people -133). The sense of "يُذْهِبْكُمْ" : *yudhhibkum*, translated as 'take you away,' is to undo or make absent with no traces left behind. This is why there is no reference to destroying, killing or exterminating. The statement in the text restricts itself to 'taking' which denotes a state of unmaking, unbeing, loss of name, identity and trace.

After having established in the first verse that Allah is All-Independent (*Ghaniyy*), Master of Mercy (*Dhur-Raḥmah*) and All-Powerful too, the text carries a warning given to disobedient people: إِنَّ مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَاٰتٍ وَّمَآ أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِيْنَ : 'Surely what you are promised [that is, the Divine punishment] is bound to come, and you cannot frustrate [it].'

Another method to awaken them from their heedlessness was adopted in the third verse (135) where it was said: قُلْ يٰقَوْمِ اعْمَلُوْا عَلٰى مَكَانَتِكُمْ إِنِّي عَامِلٌ فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهٗ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ (Say, "O my people, do at your place (whatever you do) I am to do (in my way). So, you will know for whom is the ultimate abode. Surely, the unjust shall not be successful). This is addressed to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being asked to tell those people of his in Makkah that the choice of not accepting what he is saying is theirs. Let them not accept it, stay as they are and keep on doing what their belief and hostility tell them to do - and he too will keep on doing what his belief tells him to do. In that, there was no loss for him. But, very soon, they will be the ones to find out who will be blessed with the ultimate salvation and success of the Hereafter. And, in this, let them not forget that the *Ẓalim*, the unjust, the usurpers of rights, never succeed.

Commenting on this verse, *Tafsīr* authority, Ibn Kathīr pointed out that the exact words of the text here are: مَنْ تَكُوْنُ لَهٗ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ (for whom is the ultimate abode) and not: عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ الْاٰخِرَةِ (the ultimate abode of *Akhirah*), that is, the suffix of '*Ākhirah* or Hereafter is not there. This tells us that, much earlier than the abode of *Akhirah*, the ultimate success falls to the lot of the righteous servants of Allah alone even within the present abode of the world. This stands proved from the life and times

of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and his blessed Companions. Not much time passed when all wielders of power and authority found themselves disgraced before them. Their countries were conquered at their hands. Within the period of prophethood, the whole Arabia came under his authority which soon extended to Yaman, Bahrain and the borders of Syria. Then, it was at the hands of his *Khulafā'* and the *Ṣaḥābah* that a major part of the known world of the time came under their aegis. Fullfilled stood the promise of Allah Ta'ālā: كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَاَغْلِبَنَّ اَنَا وَرُسُلِىْ (Allah has written: I shall overcome, I, and My Messengers - 58:21). And again, it was said in another verse: اِنَّا لَنَنْصُرُ رُسُلَنَا وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِى الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيَوْمَ يَقُوْمُ الْاَشْهَادُ that is, 'We shall help Our Messengers, and those who have believed, in the present world, and on the Day of *Qiyāmah*, when witnesses will stand to record their testimony on the reckoning of deeds - 40:51.'

In the fourth verse (136), the disbelievers of Arabia have been admonished for a particular error in their behaviour. The custom was that they would take out from the produce of their lands and from the income of their businesses a portion for Allah and a portion for their idols. The portion taken out for Allah they would spend on the poor and the needy while the portion taken out in the name of their idols they would spend on the priests and keepers of the temple of idols.

To begin with, enough was their injustice in that everything was created by Allah Ta'ālā, and the produce which came from them was bestowed by Him, yet they went ahead and made idols to share in what was given by Him. On top of this, they would add insult to injury when, should there be a drop in produce, they would apply this shortfall against the portion they meant for Allah saying that Allah was Independent and did not need their things. Thus, they would exact the portion of their idols in full, as well as that of their own. On some occasion, if it so happened that something from the portion taken out for the idols, or from that of their own, went into the portion reserved for Allah, they would pick it up and take it out of there to keep their accounting straight! And if came the occasion when things were the reverse of it, that is, if anything belonging to the portion of Allah was thrown in their own portion, or in the portion of their idols, it was left where it was saying that Allah is need-free, therefore, any

shortage in His share will not make any difference! The Holy Qur'ān, taking notice of this crooked conduct of theirs, has said: سَآءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ (Evil is what they judge -136). It means that their judgement is evil and crude because they are not realizing that it is Allah who created them and created everything that appears to belong to them, yet they go about equating others with Him, and to top it all, they find excuses to shift elsewhere what, according to their own intention, was supposed to belong to Allah.

The Admonition for Disbelievers - A Lesson for Muslims

This is an admonition directed against the waywardness of the disbelievers of Arabia. However, by implication, it holds a sharp lesson for Muslims as well - Muslims who devote their full potential, their life given by Allah, their body and mind, into different sections. They would reserve part of their years and time in life for Allah and His worship - though the right of Allah demanded that all time frames of their living years should have been reserved to obey and worship Him alone. May be, they could have taken out some time for themselves too to take care of human compulsions - and even then, the truth is that the right of Allah that we be grateful to Him would have still remained unfullfilled! But, here we are, in our time and in our places, doing unbelievable things. If, in the twenty four hours of a day and night of our lives, we do get around to fix some time to be devoted to remember Allah and engage ourselves in what we know as His essential *'Ibādah*, then strange things start happening. There comes an urgent need, a call or an appointment or something like that, and we become pragmatic all of a sudden. The function, the business, the need comes first. No postponement is made in what is pragmatic or personal. The urgency of work stays. The inevitability of rest time stays. The axe falls on nothing but the time which had been fixed for devotion to Allah through prayers and recitation of the Qur'ān. This happens most of the time - emergency, urgency, sickness or any other call - what is the first casualty in this rush is nothing but the time that we had earmarked for our *Dhikr* and *'Ibādah*. We just cannot say how wrong, how ungrateful and how right-compromising this attitude is. May Allah Ta'ālā keep us and all Muslims protected from it.

Verses 137 - 140

وَكَذٰلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ أَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَآؤُهُمْ
لِيُرْدُوهُمْ وَلِيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ دِينَهُمْ ط وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ مَا فَعَلُوهُ
فَذَرْهُمْ وَمَا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٧﴾ وَقَالُوا هٰذِهٖ أَنْعَامٌ وَّحَرْثٌ حِجْرٌ ق
لَّا يَطْعَمُهَآ إِلَّا مَنْ نَّشَآءُ بِزَعْمِهِمْ وَأَنْعَامٌ حُرِّمَتْ ظُهُورُهَا
وَأَنْعَامٌ لَّا يَذْكُرُونَ اسْمَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهَا افْتِرَآءً عَلَيْهِ ط سَيَجْزِيهِمْ بِمَا
كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣٨﴾ وَقَالُوا مَا فِي بُطُونِ هٰذِهِ الْأَنْعَامِ
خَالِصَةٌ لِّذُكُورِنَا وَمُحَرَّمٌ عَلٰى أَزْوَاجِنَا ج وَإِنْ يَّكُنْ مَّيْتَةً فَهُمْ
فِيهِ شُرَكَآءُ ط سَيَجْزِيهِمْ وَصْفَهُمْ ط إِنَّهُ حَكِيمٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٣٩﴾ قَدْ
خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَّحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ
اللّٰهُ افْتِرَآءً عَلَى اللّٰهِ ط قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

And thus their associate-gods have made the killing of their children alluring to many associators (idolators), so that they may lead them to disaster and may confuse their faith for them. And had Allah willed, they would not have done it. So, leave them with what they fabricate. [137]

And they say, "These are prohibited cattle and produce; none can eat them except those whom we wish" - so they claimed - "and there are cattle whose backs are prohibited (for riding or loading)." And there are cattle over which they do not pronounce the name of Allah, a fabrication against Him. He shall recompense them for what they have been fabricating. [138]

And they say, "Whatever is in the wombs of these cattle is purely for our males, and forbidden to our wives.". And if it be dead, then in it they all are sharers. Soon, He shall recompense them for what they attribute. Surely, He is All-Wise, All-Knowing. [139]

Losers are those who kill their children foolishly, without knowledge, and have taken as prohibited what Al-

lah has provided them - a fabrication against Allah. They have gone astray, and they are not on the right path. [140]

Linkage of Verses

Described in the previous verses were false beliefs of the *mushriks* of Arabia while the present verses recount their practical errors and ignorant customs. The customs of *Jāhiliyyah* mentioned in these verses are: (1) They took out a portion in the name of Allah from grains and fruits, and some in the name of idols and Jinns. Then, if by chance, some part of what belonged to the portion of Allah got mixed up with the portion reserved for idols, they would let it stay mixed as it was. When the position was the reverse of it, they would take it out and make the portion set for idols even. The excuse was that Allah is need-free. A cut in His share does not harm Him while the partners need it - so, their share should not be decreased. This evil custom was mentioned earlier in verse 136.

(2) The second custom was that they would release animals they called *Baḥīrah* and *Sā'ibah* in the name of idols and said that they were doing it for the pleasure of Allah. Here too, the portion alloted to idols was that the act of worship was intended for them - and the portion alloted to Allah was that they aimed to please Allah.

(3) The third custom was that of killing their female children.

(4) The fourth custom was that they would endow some tillage in the name of idols saying that only men could use its produce. Giving or not giving a share from it to women depended on their will. Women had no right to demand.

(5) They would do the same thing with cattle when they would restrict their use for men only.

(6) They considered the quadruped animals they released in the name of idols as unlawful for purposes of riding or carrying loads.

(7) There were quadruped animals they would specify. Using them at any time, they would not pronounce the name of Allah, neither when milking, nor when riding and nor when slaughtering.

(8) The eighth custom was that they would release animals in the name of idols, naming them as *Baḥīrah* or *Sā'ibah*. When, at the time

of slaughter, the calf came out alive, they would slaughter it as well - but, would take it as lawful for men only; for women, they took it to be unlawful - and if the calf was born still, it was supposed to be lawful for everyone.

(9) Even milk from some animals was considered lawful for men and unlawful for women.

(10) They took reverence for four kinds of animals: *Baḥīrah*, *Sā'ibah*, *Wasīlah* and *Hāmī*, as an act of worship.

[All these narrations appear in Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr and Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Ibn Zayd and As-Suddiy with exegetic deductions of Ibn al-Mundhir, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, Ibn Abī Ash-Shaybah and Ibn Ḥumayd) [As in Bayān al-Qur'ān of Maulānā Thānavī]

Verses 141 - 142

وَهُوَ الَّذِيٓ اَنْشَاَ جَنّٰتٍ مَّعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّغَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ وَّالنَّخْلَ
وَالزَّرْعَ مُخْتَلِفًا اُكُلُهٗ وَالزَّيْتُوْنَ وَالرُّمَّانَ مُتَشَابِهًا وَّغَيْرَ
مُتَشَابِهٍ ؕ كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ اِذَآ اَثْمَرَ وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ ۫ وَلَا
تُسْرِفُوْا ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿١٤١﴾ وَمِنَ الْاَنْعَامِ حَمُوْلَةً
وَّفَرْشًا ؕ كُلُوْا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا خُطُوٰتِ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ
اِنَّهٗ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿١٤٢﴾

And He is the One who has created gardens trellised and untrellised, and date-palms and crops with a variety of edibles, and the olive and the pomegranate, similar and not similar to each other. Eat of its fruit when it bears fruit, and pay its due on the day of harvest, and do not be extravagant. Surely, Allah does not like the extravagant. [141]

And among cattle (He has created) those fit for loading and those fit for laying. Eat of what Allah has provided you, and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Surely, he is an open enemy to you. [142]

Commentary

Mentioned in the previous verses was how astray the disbelievers

of Makkah had gone when they had taken their self-carved, lifeless, insensate idols as partners in the Divinity of Allah as they made them share in animals created by Him and in many other blessings which were bestowed on them. Their transgression went to the limits when they would take out charities from these blessings as an act of worship, setting aside a portion for Allah and another for their idols. Then, they would employ different excuses to take out what belonged to the portion set aside for Allah and put it in the portion reserved for the idols. Similarly, there were many other ignorance-based arbitrary customs which they had given legal status.

In the first (141) of the two verses quoted above, Allah Taʿālā mentions the wonders wrought by His perfect power in the form of what grows on the earth bringing forth the fruits of His creation. Similarly, in the second verse (142), pointed to was the creation of the different kinds of animals and cattle. Then, with this in view, comes the admonition - how could a people become so sightless as to undermine their Powerful, Knowing and Aware Creator in favour of things that weak, inert and unaware, and start taking the later as His associates and partners.

After that, they were guided towards the straight path, the most sound approach to life. They were told to understand that there was no partner or associate with Allah when He created and bestowed on them things which benefit them - how then, can they take them as sharers in the worship of Allah, something which has to be exclusively for Him? This was rank ingratitude for His blessings, and certainly an injustice. They should realize that it was Allah who bestowed these things on them. It was He who made them work for them so that they could use them as they wished and then, He made these things lawful for them. So, keeping these factors in view, it was their duty to remember the right of Allah, and be grateful to Him whenever they benefit from His blessings, and to stop making satanic thoughts and ignorance-based customs a part of their faith.

Some Words and Their Meanings

The word: أَنْشَأَ (*ansha'a*) in the first verse means 'created.' The second word: مَعْرُوشٰتٍ (*maʿrūshāt*) is from: عَرْش (*'arsh*) which means to raise, to make go high. '*Maʿrūshāt*' refers to vines of plants which are mounted

on supports called trellis, such as, the grape, and some vegetables. In contrast, is: غَيْرَ مَعْرُوْشٰتٍ (*ghayra ma'rūshāt:* untrellised) which includes all plants the vines of which are not raised high - whether trees with trunk and without vines, or they may be with vines which spread on the ground and are not raised, such as, the melon.

The word: اَلنَّخْل (*an-nakhl*) means the date tree; اَلزَّرْع (*az-zar'*) is crops of all kinds. The word: اَلزَّيْتُوْن (*az-zaytūn*) is the name of the olive tree, and of its fruit as well; and: اَلرُّمَّان (*ar-rummān*) is pomegranate.

In these verses, two kinds of farm or garden plants have been mentioned: (1) Those the vines of which are raised high, and (2) those the vines of which are not raised. The hint given is that Allah's creation is full of wisdom and mystery. Here is the same soil, the same water, air, atmosphere, yet the plants that grow are different. Then, a variety was introduced through the processing, colouring and ripening of fruits, and by the employment of countless and complex properties embedded in them, some plants were designed to bear fruit only when their vines were raised up - and even if it does show up, it would not grow and survive, such as, the grape. Then, some plants were taught a grammar of growth so that their vines would not go up even if anyone tried to do that - and should it, by chance, climb up, the fruit will grow weak and wither away, as is the case with melons of all kinds. Certainly unusual is the phenomena when some trees were made to stand on strong trunks and taken as high as it would not be possible for human ingenuity to accomplish in common practice. This talisman of trees is not simply accidental. It has wisdom, intention and mastery of execution behind it. Trees have properties and fruits have tempers. Some fruits grow and ripen in the soil and on the ground. A touch of soil would spoil others. Some of them find it necessary to hang by high branches, encounter fresh air, soak sunrays and starlights and get their colour. To each, nature has given a suitable system to perform by.

فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ

So blessed be Allah, the best of creators -23:14

After that, dates and crops were mentioned specially. The date fruit is usually eaten for pleasure. If one is hungry, it will serve as

regular food. Crops from farms provide food grains for human beings and fodder for animals. After having mentioned these two, it was said: مُخْتَلِفًا أُكُلُهٗ (with a variety of edibles). Here, the pronoun in: أُكُلُهٗ (*ukuluhū*) may be taken as referring back to: زَرْع (*zar'*: crops), or to: نَخْل (*nakhl* : date-palms) as well. However, the sense includes both. Thus, the meaning is that there are different kinds of dates, and each kind has a different taste. As for crops, the kinds go to hundreds - and each kind has its own distinct taste, property and use. Their climate and land are the same yet there is a great difference in fruits produced. Then, each kind has a different set of properties and benefits, yet they are so unique in diversity. This is a phenomenon which compels even a man of ordinary insight to realize and accept that the Power and Being that created them is a Being beyond the parameters of comprehension, the measure of whose knowledge and wisdom cannot even be imagined by human beings.

After that, two more things were mentioned: olive and pomegranate. Olive is fruit and vegetable both. The oil from olive is clean, transparent and delicate. It is better than most oils. Its properties, uses and benefits are numerous. In fact, it cures many ailments. Similarly, there are many properties and benefits of pomegranate which most people know. After mentioning these two fruits, it was said: مُتَشَابِهًا وَّغَيْرَ مُتَشَابِهٍ (similar and not similar). It means that some trees from among them bear fruits which, in terms of colour and taste, are similar to each other. Then, there are some others which have different colour and taste. That some pomegranate fruits are similar in colour, taste and size and some others are different holds true for olives too.

Having mentioned kinds of trees and fruits, given there in this verse are two injunctions to be followed. The first one is a natural satisfier of human desires. It was said: كُلُوْا مِنْ ثَمَرِهٖٓ إِذَآ أَثْمَرَ (eat of its fruit when it bears fruit). The hint given is that the purpose of the Creator in creating this diverse array of fruits is not to fulfill any of His need. These have been created for their benefit. Therefore, they were welcome to eat and enjoy them. By adding: إِذَآ أَثْمَرَ (*idhā athmara* : when it bears fruit), it was pointed out that making the fruits come out of the branches of the tree was a job beyond them. However, when those

fruits form and grow full with the permission of Allah, they become entitled to eat them at that time, whether not ripe yet.

The 'Ushr of Land

The second injunction given in this verse is: وَاٰتُوْا حَقَّهٗ يَوْمَ حَصَادِهٖ (and pay its due on the day of its harvest). The word: اتوا (*atu*) means 'bring' or 'pay'; and: حصاد (*hasād*) refers to the 'harvesting of crops' or 'picking of fruits.' And the pronoun in: حَقَّهٗ (*haqqahū* : its due) applies to everything edible mentioned above. The sense of the verse is : Eat, drink and use these things, but remember to pay its due at the time of harvesting the crops or picking the fruit. '*Ḥaqq*' or 'due' denotes giving it as *ṣadaqah* or charity to the poor and needy - as it appears in another verse in the form of a general rule:

وَالَّذِيْنَ فِيْٓ اَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَالْمَحْرُوْمِ

And in the properties of righteous people, there is a due right of the poor and needy - the asking and the non-asking - 70:24.

Is this *ṣadaqah* referred to here means common charities known as *Ṣadaqah* and *Khayrāt*, or the particular *ṣadaqah* known as 'the *Zakāh* of the land' or '*Ushr*? There are two sayings of authorities among Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'in in this matter. Some among them have favoured the first possibility. The reason given by them is that this verse is Makkī and the obligation of *Zakāh* came into force two years after the Hijrah to Madīna al-Ṭayyibah. Therefore, '*ḥaqq*' at this place cannot apply to the '*ḥaqq'of* the *Zakāh* of land. Some others among them have counted this verse as one of the Madanī verses and, according to them, '*haqqahū*' refers to the *Zakāh* of the land which is '*Ushr*.

Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr, in his *Tafsīr* and Ibn al-'Arabī in Aḥkām al-Qur'ān have resolved this by saying that, whether the verse is Makkī or Madanī, in both events, the verse could mean the *Zakāh* of land, that is, '*Ushr* - because, according to them, the initial injunction making *Zakāh* obligatory had already been revealed in Makkah. The verse of Sūrah Al-Muzzammil which contains the injunction of *Zakāh* is Makkī by consensus. However, the rate and threshold (*niṣāb*) of *Zakāh* was determined after the Hijrah. The present verse only tells us that Allah has made a due payable on the produce of the land. Its quantity has not been determined here. Therefore, as far as the

quantity is concerned, this verse is brief. The conditions in Makkah al-Mu'azzamah were different. The determination of this quantity was not needed there because Muslims did not have the assurance of acquiring the produce of their lands and fruit farms conveniently and in peace. So, during those days, the practice was no different that it used to be among people of charitable background who would give out part of their produce to the poor and needy who would gather around at the time of harvesting crops or picking fruits. No quantity was fixed for that purpose. That there was, even before Islam, the custom of such charitable giving from the land produce among other communities as well is mentioned in a verse of the Qur'ān: إِنَّا بَلَوْنٰهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَآ أَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ (Verily We have tried them as We tried the People Of the Garden, when they resolved to gather the fruits of the [garden] in the morning - 68:17 - AYA). It was two year after the Hijrah, when the Holy Prophet ﷺ explained the details of the quantities and thresholds of wealth, property and *Zakāh* under the guidance of Divine revelation, he also explained the *Zakāh* of the land. This has been reported in all *Ḥadīth* books on the authority of narrations from Sayyidnā Mu'ādh ibn Jabal, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar and Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh (رضی الله عنهم اجمعین): مَاسَقَتِ السَّمَآءُ فَفِيْهِ الْعُشْرُ وَمَا سُقِيَ بِالسَّانِيَةِ فَنِصْفُ الْعُشْرِ It means 'in the lands watered by rains where not much effort is needed for irregation, it is *wajib* to take out one-tenth of the produce as *Zakāh* - and against lands which are irrigated with water from wells taking out one-twentieth of the produce is *wājib* (obligatory).

In its Law of *Zakāh*, the Sharī'ah of Islam has used a basic principle in determining *Zakāh* of all kinds. According to this principle, the quantity of *Zakāh* on a produce involving less labour and expenditure increases while, with the increase in the labour and expenditure on a produce, the quantity of *Zakāh* decreases in that proportion. Let us understand it with the help of an example. If someone finds an ancient treasure, or hits on a gold or silver mine while prospecting, then, one-fifth of it will be due on him as *Zakāh* - because the labour and expenditure factor is less while the produce is more. After that comes rain-depending land which has the lowest ratio of labour and expenditure. The *Zakāh* for it was cut into half, that is, from one-fifth to one-tenth. After that there is the land irrigated with water from wells, or from irrigation canals against payment. This causes an increase in labour

and expenditure, so *Zakāh* against it was reduced by another half, that is, one-twentieth. Then, there is common cash, gold or silver, and trading goods. Procuring and multiplying these cost a good deal and need added labour. Therefore, the *Zakāh* for it was reduced by yet another half, that is, it was fixed at one-fortieth part.

In the present verse of the Qur'ān, and in the *Ḥadīth* quoted above, no *Niṣāb* (threshold) for the produce of the land has been determined. Therefore, the juristic creed (*Madhab*) of Imām Abū Ḥanīfah and Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal is: On the produce of the land, whether less or more, taking out its *Zakāh* is compulsory. There is a verse in Sūrah al-Baqarah which mentions the *Zakāh* of land. But, there too, no *Niṣāb* (threshold) has been mentioned. Quoted below is the text of that verse:

﴿ اَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ طَيِّبٰتِ مَاكَسَبْتُمْ وَمِمَّآ اَخْرَجْنَا لَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ ﴾

> O those who believe, spend of the good things you have earned and of what We have brought forth for you from the earth - 2:267.
>
> [Comments on 'Ushr lands also appear under the verse quoted immediately above in Ma'ariful-Qur'ān, English, Volume I, page 659]

As for trading goods and cattle, the Nisab (threshold) was given by the Holy Prophet ﷺ whereby there is no *Zakāh* under 52 1/2 tola of silver (1 tola = 0.41 ounces = 11.6363 g) or under forty goats or five camels. But, no Niṣāb has been determined concerning the produce of land in the Ḥadīth cited above, therefore, it is Wājib to take out *Zakāh* of the land whether the produce is more or less, big or small.

At the end of the verse (141) it was said: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ That is, do not spend beyond limits because Allah Ta'ālā does not like wasteful spenders. A question arises here. In case a person spends everything he has in the way of Allah, his wealth, even his life, this cannot be called '*Isrāf*' (extravagance). In fact, it would be difficult to say that, even by having done all that, one can be sure that he or she has done what was really the due of Allah! Then, what does this prohibition of '*Isrāf*' or extravagance at this place really mean? The answer is that extravagance in one department of life usually causes shortfall, shortcoming or deficiency in other departments. One who spends extravagantly to fulfill his desires generally ends up failing in his duty to fulfill the due rights of others. Prohibited here is this kind of

shortcoming. It means that should a person give away whatever he has in the way of Allah and return with empty hands, how is he going to fulfill the rights of his children, family and relatives, even those of his own self? Therefore, the rule of guidance given is that one should observe moderation even when spending in the way of Allah so that all due rights can be taken care of.

Verses 143 - 144

ثَمٰنِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ ۚ مِنَ الضَّأْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْمَعْزِ اثْنَيْنِ ۗ قُلْ ءَآ
لذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ
الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ ۗ نَبِّئُونِي بِعِلْمٍ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِينَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ وَمِنَ الْإِبِلِ
اثْنَيْنِ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ اثْنَيْنِ ۗ قُلْ ءَآلذَّكَرَيْنِ حَرَّمَ أَمِ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ أَمَّا
اشْتَمَلَتْ عَلَيْهِ أَرْحَامُ الْأُنْثَيَيْنِ ۗ أَمْ كُنْتُمْ شُهَدَاءَ إِذْ وَصّٰىكُمُ
اللّٰهُ بِهٰذَا ۚ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا لِيُضِلَّ
النَّاسَ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِينَ ﴿١٤٤﴾

(He has created) eight pairs: two of sheep and two of goats. Say, "Is it the two males that He has prohibited or the two females? Or, what the wombs of the two females contain? Tell me with knowledge if you are true" [143] **and two of camels and two of cows. Say, "Is it the two males He has prohibited or the two females? Or, were you present when Allah has advised you of this?" So, who is more unjust than the one who fabricates a lie against Allah in order to misguide people without knowledge. Surely, Allah gives no guidance to an unjust people.** [144]

Verses 145 - 147

قُلْ لَا أَجِدُ فِي مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ مُحَرَّمًا عَلٰى طَاعِمٍ يَطْعَمُهُ إِلَّا أَنْ
يَكُونَ مَيْتَةً أَوْ دَمًا مَسْفُوحًا أَوْ لَحْمَ خِنْزِيرٍ فَإِنَّهُ رِجْسٌ أَوْ فِسْقًا
أُهِلَّ لِغَيْرِ اللّٰهِ بِهِ ۚ فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ غَفُورٌ

رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٥﴾ وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَّمْنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفُرٍ ۖ وَمِنَ
الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنَمِ حَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا إِلَّا مَا حَمَلَتْ ظُهُورُهُمَا
أَوِ الْحَوَايَا أَوْ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظْمٍ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ جَزَيْنَاهُم بِبَغْيِهِمْ ۖ وَإِنَّا
لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿١٤٦﴾ فَإِن كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُل رَّبُّكُمْ ذُو رَحْمَةٍ وَاسِعَةٍ ۖ
وَلَا يُرَدُّ بَأْسُهُ عَنِ الْقَوْمِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٤٧﴾

Say, "I do not find, in what has been revealed to me, anything prohibited for anyone who eats it, unless it be carrion or blood that has flowed out, or flesh of swine - because it is impure - or there be a sin by invoking on it the name of someone other than Allah. However, if anyone is compelled by necessity - neither desiring nor transgressing then, your Lord is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [145]

And for those who are Jews We prohibited all that which has claws. And of cows and goats, We prohibited for them their fat, except what their backs contain, or the entrails, or what is attached to a bone. Thus We recompensed them for their transgression. And We are surely true. [146]

Then, if they belie you, say, "Your Lord is the Lord of all-embracing mercy, and His penalty cannot be averted from the sinning people." [147]

Verses 148 - 150

سَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا أَشْرَكْنَا وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا
حَرَّمْنَا مِن شَيْءٍ ۚ كَذَٰلِكَ كَذَّبَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ
ذَاقُوا بَأْسَنَا ۗ قُلْ هَلْ عِندَكُم مِّنْ عِلْمٍ فَتُخْرِجُوهُ لَنَا ۖ إِن
تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ أَنتُمْ إِلَّا تَخْرُصُونَ ﴿١٤٨﴾ قُلْ فَلِلَّهِ
الْحُجَّةُ الْبَالِغَةُ ۖ فَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَاكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٤٩﴾ قُلْ هَلُمَّ
شُهَدَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ يَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ هَٰذَا ۖ فَإِن شَهِدُوا فَلَا

تَشْهَدْ مَعَهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَآءَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِـَٔايٰتِنَا وَالَّذِينَ لَا
يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ وَهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿١٥٠﴾

Those who associate partners with Allah will say, "Had Allah willed, we would have not associated (partners with Him), nor our fathers, nor would we have made anything prohibited." In the same way belied those before them until they tasted Our penalty. Say, "Have you any knowledge that you may bring forth for us? You follow nothing but whims, and do nothing but make conjectures." [148]

Say, "Then, it is Allah who has the perfect proof. So, had He willed, He would have brought you all on the right path." [149]

Say, "Bring your witnesses who testify that Allah has prohibited this." Then, if they testify, do not testify with them, and do not follow the desires of those who have belied Our signs and those who do not believe in the Hereafter, and with their Lord, they equate others. [150]

Verses 151 - 153

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْـًٔا
وَّبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۚ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِّنْ إِمْلَاقٍ ؕ نَحْنُ
نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ ۚ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ ۚ
وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللّٰهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٥١﴾ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ
أَحْسَنُ حَتّٰى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهٗ ۚ وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ
لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا ۚ وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا
قُرْبٰى ۚ وَبِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ أَوْفُوا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰىكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ
﴿١٥٢﴾ وَأَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا

السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهِ ۭ ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَتَّقُوْنَ ﴿۱۵۳﴾

Say, "Come, I recite what your Lord has prohibited for you: "Do not associate anything with Him (as partners); and be good to parents, and do not kill your children because of poverty - We will give provision to you, and to them as well - and do not go near shameful acts, whether they are open or secret; and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity, except by right." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may understand. [151]

And do not approach the property of the orphan, except with the best possible conduct, until he reaches maturity. And give the measure and the weight to the full in all fairness - We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - and when you speak, be just, even if there be a relative; and fulfill the covenant of Allah." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may observe the advice. [152]

And: "This is My path, straight. So, follow it, and do not follow the (other) ways, lest it should take you away from His way." This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may be God-fearing. [153]

Commentary

Prior to the verses appearing above, for about two to three sections, the recurring theme has been how heedless and ignorant human beings had bypassed the law revealed by the Law Giver and the Creator of whatever there is in the heavens and the earth and, in its place, had taken ancestral and innovated customs as their religion. There were things Allah had made unlawful. They took them as lawful and started using them. Then, there were things Allah had made lawful. They made these unlawful for themselves. Again, they made some things lawful for men and unlawful for women, while some others they declared to be lawful for women but unlawful for men.

There are three verses here (143, 144 and 145) which describe those particular things which have been declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā.

There are nine things mentioned in the detailed statement (151-152). After that, comes the tenth commandment in the words: هٰذَا صِرَاطِىْ مُسْتَقِيْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ That is, this path of Mine is straight. So, follow it - 153. This statement points out to the religion and code (*Din* and *Shari'ah*) brought and taught by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and entrusts the whole field of Ḥalal (lawful) and Ḥaram (unlawful), *Ja'iz* (permissible) and *Na-Ja'iz* (impermissible), *Makruh* (reprehensible) and *Mustaḥabb* (recommended) to the standard that everyone should follow the Muḥammadi Shari'ah, take what it says is Ḥalal as Ḥalal, and take what it says is Ḥaram as Ḥaram, and let no one go about deciding what is Ḥalal and what is Ḥaram on one's own.

Then, there appears a detailed statement of ten things in these verses where the real objective is to describe things which are Ḥaram - which required that all these be described in the negative case. But, the Holy Qur'an, in the wisdom of its approach, has described some of them positively in the imperative form - which means that acting against it is Ḥaram (Kashshaf). Its wisdom will become evident a little later. However, the ten things the unlawfulness of which appears in these verses are: (1) To associate anyone with Allah Ta'ala in belief, deed, worship or obedience; (2) not be good to parents; (3) to kill children because of poverty; (4) to indulge in shameful doings; (5) to kill someone unjustly; (6) to eat up the orphan's property by false means; (7) to weigh or measure short; (8) to be unjust in witness, judgement or speech; (9) to betray the covenant of Allah; and (10) to avoid the straight path of Allah and follow other ways right and left.

Some Virtues of the Verses

Ka'b al-Aḥbar, an accomplished scholar of the Torah, was a Jew before he became a Muslim. He says that these verses of the Holy Qur'an which describe ten unlawful things are with what the Torah, the Book of Allah, begins after *Bismillah*. It has also been said that these are the ten commandments revealed to Sayyidna Musa عليه السلام.

Commentator of the Qur'an, Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه says that these are the 'Verses of Established Meaning' (*Muḥkam Ayat*) mentioned in Surah 'Al-'Imran (3:7). On these, all religious systems brought by prophets عليهم السلام - from Sayyidna Adam عليه السلام to the Last among Prophets صلى الله عليه وسلم - have been in agreement and none

of these was abrogated in any religion, community or Shari'ah. (Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

These Verses are the Will and Testament of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

According to a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ reported in Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr, he said that a person who wishes to see a special will of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم with his seal on it, he should recite these verses. Therein lies the will and testament bequeathed under the command of his Lord by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم to his *Ummah*.

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported by Ḥākim that, addressing his *Ṣaḥābah*, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: 'Who will take a pledge of allegiance at my hands (بیعت : *bay'ah*) on three verses?' After that, he recited these three verses and said: 'A person who fulfills this *Bay'ah* (pledge of allegiance), his reward stands due with Allah.'

DETAILS OF TEN PROHIBITIONS AND EXPLANATION OF THE THREE VERSES

These verses (151-153) open with the words: قُلْ تَعَالَوْا اَتْلُ مَاحَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ (Say, "Come, I recite what your Lord has prohibited for you"). The word: تَعَالَوْا (*ta'ālaw*) here (translated as 'come,' does carry the essential meaning, but misses the refinement of what it implies in the text - a difficulty technically impossible to surmount in a task of this delicate nature when exact parallels just do not exist - tr.) is an expression used at a time when the caller stands on high ground and calls those beneath to come close to him. The hint thus released is towards the prospect of their rising high and gaining prestige by accepting this invitation. The sense of the sentence where the address is to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is that he should ask these people to come along so that he may recite to them things which Allah Ta'ālā has made Ḥaram for them. What he was going to give them was a message directly from Allah Ta'ālā and, as such, there was no intrusion of someone's opinion, estimation or conjecture in it. This was in their interest so that they could get ready to stay safe against them rather than go about branding as Ḥaram what Allah has made Ḥalāl.

Though, the address in this verse directly refers to the disbelievers

of Makkah, but the subject of the address is general in its nature. It includes the entire humankind, whether believers or disbelievers, Arabs or non-Arabs, or those living now or generations to come in the future. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The First Grave Sin Forbidden is *Shirk*

After having addressed with this concern and elegance, the first thing to be identified of all that has been prohibited was: أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا: That you shall not associate anyone or anything with Allah. This was the first task. And do not make idols into God like the polytheists of Arabia, nor call prophets God or son of God like Jews and Christians, nor take angels to be daughters of God like others, nor equate prophets and saints with Allah Ta'ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power like the ignorant masses.

Shirk : Definition and Kinds

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the word: شَيْئًا (*shai'an*:anything), at this place, could also mean that one should not be involved in any kind of *Shirk*, whether manifest (*jaliyy*) or concealed (*khafiyy*). Everyone knows manifest *Shirk* which is the ascribing of equals or partners to Allah either by associating someone with Allah in worship and obedience or in His exclusive attributes. And concealed *Shirk* is that one, in his or her vocation in life, in material and religious objectives and in profit and loss, though holds the belief that Allah is the Maker and Mover of things yet, in practice, takes others as such, and pins all efforts and hopes on them, or is a hypocrite in acts of worship, offering prayers correctly to show off before others, or spends in charity to earn a good name for himself, or actually, in practice, takes someone other than Allah to be the controlling authority in profit and loss. The sage, Shaykh Sa'di رحمة الله عليه has put the idea in a nutshell when he said:

دریں نوعے ازشرك پوشیده است   که زیدم به بخشید و عمرم بخست

Concealed here too is a kind of *Shirk* -
That A made me gain and B made me lose.

The reality is no more but that, whatever the gain or loss, it is from that Absolute Master. The supposed names A and B are drapes from behind which comes the manifestation of gain or loss. Otherwise, the truth of the matter, as it appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth, is: 'If all Jinns and

human beings join up to bring to you a benefit which Allah Ta'ālā has not destined for you, they can never dare do that - in the same way, if all Jinns and human beings join up to bring a loss on you which Allah Ta'ālā has not willed, this too is not possible for anyone to do.

In brief, one should abstain strictly from both kinds of Shirk, manifest and concealed. The way worshiping idols is included under Shirk, also included thereunder is equating prophets and saints with Allah Ta'ālā in His attributes of knowledge and power. If, God forbid, this happens to be the very belief of someone, then, it will be classed as manifest Shirk; and if, such a belief is not there, but this happens to be done in actual practice, then, it will be called concealed Shirk. At this place, the very first instruction given is to stay away from Shirk. The reason is that Shirk is a crime about which the Qur'ān has given the decision that, for it, there is no forgiveness. The forgiveness of sins - other than Shirk - is possible depending on different causes. Therefore, as narrated by Sayyidnā 'Ubādah ibn Ṣāmit رضی اللہ عنہ and Sayyidnā Abū Ad-Dardā' رضی اللہ عنہ, it appears in Ḥadīth that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:

> Do not ascribe anyone as partner with Allah - even if you are dismembered, or hanged, or burnt alive.

The Second Sin : Mistreating Parents

Mentioned after that was: وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا (and be good to parents). The purpose at this place is to tell not to be disobedient to parents and not to cause pain to them. But, it is in a way of wisdom that the prohibition has been sublimated as 'be good to parents.' The aim is to point out that, in the matter of parents, it is not enough that one does not disobey parents or does not cause any pain to them, but it is one's duty to keep them pleased with decent, generous and obliging treatment. This has been made more explicit in another verse of the Qur'ān where it appears as: وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ which means: For them, lower your shoulders in humility - 17:24 - (an eloquently figurative mode of describing the attitude of love, reverence, readiness and availibity to help out and care for, in all sincerity, and in tenderness at its sublimest, something the Qur'ān has itself put in one word, 'mercy', suffixed after the words of the verse quoted above).

It will be noticed that, in this verse, causing pain to parents or ex-

posing them to physical or emotion inconveniences has been placed as the second crime after Shirk. This is similar to the instruction given in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān where Allah Ta'ālā has combined the duty of being obedient to them, and being responsible to see that they are comfortable, with the obligation to worship Him alone. It was said:

وَقَضٰى رَبُّكَ اَلَّا تَعْبُدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ اِحْسَانًا

And your Lord has decreed that you shall not worship anyone other than Him and that you shall be good to parents - 17:23.

Then, in Sūrah Luqman, it was said:

اَنِ اشْكُرْلِىْ وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ ۭ اِلَيَّ الْمَصِيْرُ

Be grateful to Me, and to your parents, and to Me is the return (meaning: If you do otherwise, you will be punished) - 31:14.

It has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ in the Ṣaḥīḥayn (the two collections of Ṣaḥīḥ *Aḥādīth* by Al-Bukhārī and Muslim) that he asked the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم: 'Which deed is the best?' He said: 'Offering *Ṣalāh* at its due time (*Mustaḥabb* : recommended time).' Then, he asked again: 'After that, which deed is the best?' To that, he said: 'Being good to parents.' Once again, he asked: 'Which deed comes after that?' He said: '*Jihād* in the way of Allah.'

According to a narration by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, once the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said the words: رَغِمَ اَنْفُهٗ رَغِمَ اَنْفُهٗ رَغِمَ اَنْفُهٗ three times, that is, 'disgraced is he, disgraced is he, disgraced is he.' The noble Companions submitted: '*Yā Rasūl* Allah, who is disgraced?' He said: 'The person who found his father and mother, or one of them, in old age and still he did not enter the *Jannah*.'

It means that serving parents during their old age makes it certain that the server will be admitted to Paradise. And certainly deprived and disgraced is he who has allowed such an easy bargain of Paradise slip out of his hands. This bargain is easy because parents are naturally affectionate to their children on their own. A little consideration here and there would make them all too happy. So, pleasing parents does not depend on or require a major act of grace. The restriction of old age placed here is because parents, when healthy and strong, take

care of their needs by themselves - rather, would not hesitate to come to their assistance when needed, financially, physically or morally. At that time, neither do they need being served, nor would that service carry any distinct weight of its own. Serving parents can only be worthwhile and praiseworthy at a time when they need it because of their old age.

The Third Prohibition : Killing Children

The third thing made Ḥaram in these verses is the killing of children. It is relevant in the context because the right of parents due on children was taken up before it - and here, it is the right of children which is due on parents. The worst limit of evil treatment of children was what was practiced in the days of *Jāhiliyyah* when they were killed or buried alive. This verse stops them from doing that. It was said: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا اَوْلَادَكُمْ مِّنْ إِمْلَاقٍ ۭ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ (and do not kill your children because of poverty - We will give provision to you, and to them as well).

During the pre-Islam days of Arab *Jāhiliyyah*, there was a cruel custom. When a girl was born in a household, they would bury her alive fearing the shame of having to take someone as a son-in-law - and there were occasions when, fearing that they would have difficulties in feeding and providing for children, these cruel people would kill them with their own hands. The Qur'ān erased this custom. Then, by saying what was said above, it gave them the treatment they needed against this mental sickness of theirs - because of which, that is, because of their worry as to how they were going to feed them, they committed such a heinous crime. Allah Ta'ālā has told them in this verse that they were not the ones really responsible for feeding and providing for them. This was the direct responsibility of Allah Ta'ālā. They too, in their food and provisions, were dependent on Him. He gives that to them. Then, they give it to children too. If He does not provide them with it, they could not even think of producing one grain of wheat or rice on their own. Miracles do not work like that. Bringing out a tiny seed by tearing its way through tons of earth on the fields in the form of a tender bud or shoot and then giving it the shape of a tree and then making them sprout with flowers and fruits is a question they should answer. Whose work is that? Can a father and mother do that? Far from it, these are all wonders wrought by the power and

wisdom of the Absolute Master. The role human beings play in this phenomena is limited. They can do no more than make the land clean and soft, water the plants when they come out and look after them. But, they have no role in making flowers and fruits come out. This tells us that the idea of parents that they provide for children is wrong. In fact, it is from the unseen treasures of Allah Ta'ālā Himself that parents too get their provision, and their children as well. Therefore, by bringing in the mention of parents earlier in the sentence, it was said: 'We will provide for you, and for them as well.' In making the reference to parents precede, the hint given may be that: The provisions are given to you so that you pass it on to children - as it appears in a *Ḥadīth* of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم where he is reported to have said:

إِنَّمَا تُنْصَرُوْنَ وَتُرْزَقُوْنَ بِضُعَفَاءِكُمْ

> It is only for the sake of the weak among you that Allah Ta'ālā helps and provides for you too.

The same subject appears in Sūrah al-Isrā' of the Holy Qur'ān where, in the matter of *Rizq*, children have been mentioned before parents by saying: نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ that is, 'We shall provide for them, and for you as well - 17:21.' Here too, the hint given is that 'deserving of being provided for first, in Our sight, are weak children who cannot do that on their own - it is for their sake that *rizq* is given to you.'

A Modern Form of Killing Children

It is obvious that the crime of killing children and that it is a grave sin as pointed out in this verse applies to formal killing as such. But, a little thought would prove that the failure to give proper education and training to children as a result of which they remain uninformed or heedless to Allah, His *Rasūl* and the concern for *'Ākhirah* and, God forbid, fall into immoral and shameless life patterns alien to Islam, then, this attitude too, shall be no less than killing of children. The Qur'ān calls a person who does not know Allah and does not obey Him a dead person. This is what has been explained earlier in this very Sūrah in the verse: أَوَمَنْ كَانَ مَيْتًا فَأَحْيَيْنٰهُ (Could it be that the one who was dead and We gave him life ... - 6:122). People who do not attend to the grooming of the deeds and morals of their children, leave them open and free (to be hunted by aggressive influences around them, influences which

have an 'open season' in our time), or let them go through a system of education as a result of which Islamic morals are ruined, then, they too, in a way, are liable to be charged with the crime of killing their children - for formal killing only ruins what is one's transitory life in the mortal world, but this type of killing ruins what is one's eternal life in the '*Ākhirah*, a terrible loss indeed.

The Fourth Prohibition : Shameful Acts

The fourth thing declared Ḥaram in these verses is the doing of what is shameful. About it, says the Qur'ān: وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَاظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ (and do not go near shameful acts, whether they are open or secret-151).

The word: فَوَاحِشُ (*al-fawāḥish*) is the plural form of: فَاحِشَة (*fāḥishah*) and the words: فُحش (*faḥsh*), فَحْشَاء (*faḥshā'*) and فَاحِشَة (*fāḥisha*) are all verbal nouns and are usually translated in English as immodest, indecent or shameful acts. In the terminology of the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, these words are used to denote every evil act the vicious and disorderly effects of which reach far and wide. This is the meaning given by Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī in Mufradāt al-Qur'ān and Ibn Kathīr in An-Nihāyah. The prohibition of *Fuḥsh* and *Faḥshā'* (obscenity, indecency, adultery, fornication, whoredom or abomination or monstrosity of any description) appears time and again in the Holy Qur'ān, for example, in Sūrah An-Naḥl, it is said: يَنْهٰى عَنِ الْفَحْشَآءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ (He forbids you from the indecent and the evil -16:90) and, in Sūrah Al-A'rāf, it is said: حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ (my Lord has forbidden indecent deeds - 7:33).

So, in this general sense of the word used by the Qur'ān, included there are all grave sins, whether related to words or deeds, whether committed openly or secretly, in fact, all doings which are counter to good and right and all acts which are counter to modesty and shame. That is why this word is generally used in the sense of shameful deeds. In this verse of the Qur'ān, it has been stressed that one should not go even near to what are shameful acts. If this is taken in a broad and general sense, it will become inclusive of all evil traits and sins, whether of speech, or those of hands and feet and the heart. And if it is taken in the commonly and widely understood sense, that is, in the sense of immodesty, then, it would be referring to shameful acts, their prelimineries and their means and motives.

Then, within this verse, there is the explanation of the word '*al-*

fawāḥish' when it is said: مَاظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ (whether they are open or secret). Thus, according to the first Tafsīr, all outward indecencies would mean all sins committed through speech or through the use of hands and feet etc., and inward indecencies would be referring to sins which issue forth from the heart, such as, envy, malice, greed, ungratefulness, impatience and others of this nature.

According to the other Tafsīr, outward indecencies would mean acts of immodesty indulged in openly while those inward would be the ones done secretly. The open practice of evil includes all its preliminaries and accessories. Looking at some woman with evil intentions, touching her with hands etc., talking to her in that way are all included under it. As for inward indecency, it includes all secret plans made to actualize thoughts and intentions which are put into practice to achieve the evil and indecent end.

Some respectable commentators say that outward indecencies refer to shameful acts the evil of which is common knowledge and everyone knows what it means. As for inward indecencies, they refer to acts which are immodest in the sight of Allah, though people generally do not take them as bad, or common people are not aware that they are Ḥaram, for example, after having divorced a wife thrice, to keep living with her as a wife (which she is not anymore), or marrying a woman marriage with whom is not lawful in Sharī'ah.

In short, this verse, in terms of the real sense of *'al-fawāḥish'*, encompasses all outward and inward sins - and, in terms of the commonly held view, it is inclusive of all open and secret methods of immodesty, indecency and act of shame. Then, the command given in this matter is that one should not go even near things like that. The insistence on 'not going even near them' means that one should even abstain from going to a place when there is an apprehension that such a visit would cause the visitor to be smeared with sin, and that one should also abstain from deeds which lead on to ways of sin. In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

مَنْ حَامَ حَوْلَ حِمىً اَوْشَكَ اَنْ يَّقَعَ فِيْهِ

It is not unlikely that one who keeps roaming around a prohibited place might enter it as well.

Therefore, precaution demands that one should not even go near what is prohibited.

The Fifth Prohibition : Killing Unjustly

Of the prohibitions, the fifth is killing unjustly. About it, it was said: وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِیْ حَرَّمَ اللّٰہُ اِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ (and do not kill a person whom Allah has given sanctity). The details of this right to kill have been given by the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم in a *Ḥadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. He said: 'Killing a Muslim is not lawful except for three reasons: (1) That he commits adultery despite being married; (2) that he has killed someone unjustly, and is killed in even retaliation (*Qiṣāṣ*) for it; and (3) that, by leaving his true faith, he has become an apostate (*Murtadd*).'

When Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī, the third Rightly-Guided Khalīfah was besieged by rebels who wanted to kill him, he recited this *Ḥadīth* before them and said: 'With the grace of Allah, I have been free of these things all my life. Not only during my days in Islam, I never indulged in adultery even during the days of *Jāhiliyyah*, nor did I ever kill anyone, nor did the thought that I should leave my faith in Islam ever crossed my mind. Then, on what basis do you want to kill me?'

And the way killing a Muslim is unlawful without valid reason, so it is with the killing of a non-Muslim who lives in an Islamic country as its law-abiding citizen, or is one of those with whom Muslims have a bilateral pact. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ reported in Tirmidhī and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said: 'Whoever has killed a *Dhimmī* (protected non-Muslim citizen of a Muslim country) has broken his covenant with Allah - and a person who has broken the covenant of Allah will never smell even the scent of *Jannah*, though the scent of *Jannah* reaches as far as a travel distance of seventy years.'

In this one verse - after having described five of the ten prohibitions - it was said: ذٰلِکُمْ وَصّٰکُمْ بِہٖ لَعَلَّکُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ (This is what He has emphasized for you so that you may understand).

The Sixth Prohibition : Eating up the Property of the Orphan by False Means

About the unlawfulness of devouring the property of the orphan by false means - the sixth command given in the second verse (152) - it was said: وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ (And do not approach the property of the orphan except with the best possible conduct, until he reaches maturity). The address here is to the guardians of orphaned children who are minors. The guardians have been told that they should treat the property of orphans as if it was fire. They should not go near it to take from it or eat of it unlawfully. What is said here appears in another verse of the Qur'an in the same words: (وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ (17:34) and also in Sūrah Al-Nisā' (4:10): 'Surely, those who eat up the property of the orphans, unjustly, they only eat fire into their bellies, and they shall soon enter a blazing hell.)

However, protecting the property of the orphan and investing it in a permissible business where the danger of loss does not customarily exist is fair enough, even necessary. Guardians of the orphaned children should do so.

After that, specified was the limit until when the property of the orphan was to be guarded: حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ (until he reaches maturity), that is, when the orphan reaches maturity, the responsibility of the guardian ends and his property should be entrusted to him.

The word: أَشُدَّ (*ashudd*) really means strength. According to the majority of *'Ulamā*, it begins with puberty. When signs of puberty appear in a child, or when he reaches the age of full fifteen years, that will be the time, he will be considered legally mature.

Still, after his having attained physical maturity, it will be seen whether or not he has acquired the ability to protect his property and spend out of it correctly and satisfactorily. If this ability is found in him, his property should be entrusted to him. If he does not seem to have that ability in him at that time, it is the responsibility of the guardian to keep protecting his property until the age of twenty five years. At any time during this period, whenever he picks up the ability to protect his property and manage his living through business or vocation, his property can be handed over to him. And if - even upto the

age of twenty five years, such ability does not show up in him - then, according to Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, his property should, after all, be given to him, but this would be subject to the condition that this lack of ability on his part should have not reached the limits of insanity. And, according to some Imāms, his property should not be entrusted in his hands even then, instead of which, the Qaḍī or Judge of an Islamic Court should entrust the responsibility of protecting his property to a trustworthy and responsible person.

Once again, what has been said here is based on a statement of the Holy Qur'ān appearing in another verse where it was said: فَإِنْ اٰنَسْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ اَمْوَالَهُمْ (... if you perceive in them proper understanding, hand over to them their property - 4:6). It means: When the orphaned children become mature and you see in them the ability to protect their property by themselves and invest it gainfully, entrust the property to them. This verse has told us that becoming mature is not sufficient as justification for entrusting the property of the orphan to him, instead, it is conditioned by the ability to protect property and to invest it gainfully.

The Seventh Prohibition : Weighing and Measuring Short

The seventh command in this verse is to give full weight and full measure in all fairness. The word: بِالْقِسْطِ (*bi al-qisṭ*), translated as 'in all fairness,' applies to a transaction in which the giver does not decrease anything from what is due to be received by the other party - and the receiver does not take anything more than what is due to come to him from the giver (Ruh al-Ma'ani).

Weighing and measuring short in common give and take of things has been sternly forbidden by the Qur'ān. Severe warning to those who do that appears in Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifīn (83).

Commentator of the Qur'ān, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه reports that, addressing those who weigh and measure in business, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Weighing and measuring is a line of duty being unfair in which has caused many communities before you to be destroyed by Divine punishment (so, be fully cautious in this matter). (Tafsīr ibn Kathīr)

Officials and Workers who fall short in Set Duties come under this Qur'anic Ruling

It should be borne in mind that weighing and measuring short called "*Taṭfīf*" in the Qur'ān is not simply restricted to weighing short and measuring less. In fact, falling short in giving the other person his right is also included under '*Taṭfīf*' as illusrated by a report from Sayyidnā 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ appearing in the Mu'aṭṭa' of Imām Mālik. When Sayyidnā 'Umar noticed someone making the required movements of his Ṣalāh short, he said: 'You made '*Taṭfīf*,' meaning thereby that he did not fulfill the right of Ṣalāh as it was due and obligatory. After having reported this incident, Imām Mālik says: لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَفَاءٌ وَتَطْفِيفٌ that is, giving the full measure due, and giving short of it, applies to everything, and not in weights and measures only.

This tells us that an employee who does not discharge his duties as required, steals time or delays work; and a wage earner who falls short in delivering the service agreed to; and for that matter anyone - a minister of government or his peon, an assistant in an office, or a scholar or religious worker - shall all be included under the Qur'ānic term, "*Al-Muṭaffifīn*," if they fall short in fulfilling the right of others due against them.

After that, it was said: لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity). In some narrations of *Ḥadīth*, it has been explained as a hint of exception, that is, a person who does everything possible within his control to give full consideration to the need of giving full weight and measure as due and, in case, some insignificant increase or decrease takes place inadvertently, then, that would stand excused because that is beyond his power and control.

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, the addition of this sentence in between indicates that it is better to give a little more while fulfilling what is due so that there remains no doubt of being short in giving - as it was when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, on a similar occasion, ordered a person weighing: زِنْ وَأَرْجِحْ (*zin wa arjiḥ*) that is, 'weigh and be liberal' (literally, weigh and tilt the balance in favour of the receiver). (Ahmad, Abū Dāwūd, and Tirmidhī following a narration of Sayyidnā Suwayd ibn Qaiys)

And this was the usual practice of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم himself. Whenever he had a right of someone due against him, and when came the time for him to pay it back, he liked to pay more than what the right of the other person was. Then, there is a Ḥadīth in Al-Bukhārī based on a narration by Sayyidnā Jābir رضی اللہ عنہ in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said:

> 'May the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā be on the person who is lenient when selling by giving more than the due; and is also lenient by not taking more than the due - instead, accepts in good grace, even if it happens to be somewhat short of it.'

But, this is an ethical rule - that one gives more when giving and, accepts less when taking, avoids a quarrel. There is nothing legal involved here which would compel one to do so. It is to point out to this very aspect that it was said in the Qur'ān that "We do not obligate anyone beyond his capacity." In other words, giving the other person more than it was his due; and to be satisfied with any decrease in what was one's own due, was not a mandatory command because it is not easy for common people to do so.

The Eighth Commandment :

BE JUST - Doing Otherwise is Ḥarām

The verse says: وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَاعْدِلُوا وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ (and when you speak, be just, even if there be a relative). It will be noticed that nothing particular has been mentioned at this place. Therefore, the majority of commentators hold the view that the statement includes everything said - whether it is a witness given in some case, or a judgement from a judge, or an order from a ruling official, or whatever different kinds of things said to each other. About all such things, the command of the Qur'ān is that one should abide by the criterion of truth and justice when saying what one has to say - everywhere, on all occasions and under all conditions. As for the sense of abiding by truth and justice when appearing as a witness in some case, it is fairly obvious - that is, the witness should tell what he knows for certain - frankly and clearly - without adding or subtracting one word on his own, or injecting his guess or conjecture in it, or worrying about whom it would benefit and whom it would hurt. Similar is the situation of a judge who has to decide a case. He will examine witnesses according to the Islamic legal

norms, take what they offer and look at them in conjunction with what stands proved through other kinds of approaches and, then, give his decision. Be it a witness, or be it a judgement, nothing should stop one from saying what is right, true and just - not friendship and love, not enmity and hostility, nothing. For this reason, added here was the sentence: وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبٰى (even if there be a relative). It means: Even if the person, in whose case you are appearing as a witness, or a judge, be a relative of yours - even then, you should not let truth and justice slip out of your hands, neither in witness, nor in the judgement.

The purpose in this verse is to stop false witness and unjust judgement. About false witness, Abū Dāwūd and Ibn Mājah have reported the following saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

'False witness is equal to Shirk'. He said it three times and, then, recited this verse:

فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْاَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوْا قَوْلَ الزُّوْرِ حُنَفَآءَ لِلّٰهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِيْنَ بِهٖ

So, avoid the filth of idols, and avoid saying the false, being upright for Allah, without being associators (of partners) with Him - 22:30.

Similarly, about deciding against truth and justice, there is a saying of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which has been reported by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of a narration by Sayyidnā Buraydah ibn Ḥuṣayb رضى الله عنه. It says:

> 'There are three kinds of Qaḍīs (judges): One of them would go to *Jannah* while the other two, to *Jahannam*. The one who arrived at the truth by investigating into the case according to the Sharī'ah, then gave his decision in the light of the truth, he belongs in *Jannah* - and he who investigated and did find out the truth, but knowingly gave his judgement against it, his place is in Hell. And similarly, a Qaḍī who did not know, or fell short on investigation and deliberation, and gave a decision in that state of ignorance, he too will go to *Jahannam*.'

The same subject has appeared in other verses of the Holy Qur'ān more explicitly and emphatically, enjoining that there should be no trace or effect of friendship, kinship or any other relation based on mutual interest - or enmity and hostility - in witness, or judgement. For

example, in Sūrah An-Nisā,' it was said:

وَلَوْ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَوِ الْوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْاَقْرَبِيْنَ

('O those who believe, be upholder of justice - witnesses for Allah) 'even though against yourselves or the parents and the relatives.' - 4:135.

In the same vein, there is another command given in Sūrah al-Ma'idah which says:

وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُ قَوْمٍ عَلٰٓى اَلَّا تَعْدِلُوْا

(O those who believe, be steadfast for Allah as witnesses for justice). 'And malice against a people should not bid you to not doing justice' - 5:8.

It means that enmity with a people should not make you willing to witness or to judge against the dictate of justice. Finally, as for upholding truth and justice in matters other than witness and judgement, such as, mutual conversations referred to earlier, the best policy is not to lie, not to speak ill of anyone behind his back, not to say anything which would hurt others, or cause physical or financial loss to anyone.

The Ninth Command: To Fulfill the Covenant of Allah - i.e., Breach of Pledge is Ḥarām

The ninth command given in this verse is to fulfill the covenant of Allah and avoid breaking the solemn pledge given. It was said: وَبِعَهْدِ اللّٰهِ اَوْفُوْا (and fulfill the covenant of Allah). The 'covenant of Allah' could mean the pledge that was taken from every human being at the beginning of life when all human beings were asked: اَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ ('Am I not your *Rabb*, your Lord?'). All of them said: بَلٰى ('*Bala*':yes), that is, 'there is no doubt that You are our *Rabb*, our Lord.' This pledge demands but that we do not disobey any command given by our Lord, our creator, cherisher, nurturer and caretaker. Consider everything He has asked to do at the level of the highest possible priority and take it to be the most important of all that we do. And as for things He has asked us not to do, we should not go even near them - even stay away from falling in doubts about them. Thus, the essence of this covenant is that we should obey Allah Ta'ālā totally and perfectly.

It is also possible that 'covenant' here means the particular pledges

mentioned in the Qur'ān on different occasions - out of which are these verses the Tafsīr of which is before you (and in which ten injunctions have been described emphatically).

'*Ulama* say that, in this pledge, included there is the fulfilling of vows (*nadhr* or *mannat*), a way through which one gives a pledge to Allah Ta'ālā that he or she would do something. In another verse of the Holy Qur'ān, this has also been mentioned more explicity by saying: يُوْفُوْنَ بِالنَّذْرِ that is, 'the righteous servants of Allah fulfill their *nadhr* (vow).'

In short, it can be said that this command is, though ninth in the series, but in terms of its reality, it encompasses all imperatives and prohibitions of Islamic legal injunctions.

It will be noticed that, at the end of this second verse (152) too, there appears a sentence of persuasion, that is: ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (This is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may observe the advice).

Then comes the third verse (153) where the tenth injunction has been described as follows: وَاَنَّ هٰذَا صِرَاطِيْ مُسْتَقِيْمًا فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (And: This is My path [headed] straight. So, follow it, and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way).

In this verse, the word: هٰذَا (*hādha*:this) denotes the religion of Islam, or the Qur'ān. Also possible is that the reference may be to Sūrah Al-An'ām itself because, here too, the full range of the fundamentals of Islam - *Tauḥīd*, *Risālah* and principles governing injunctions of the Sharī'ah - find mention. As for the word: مُسْتَقِيْمًا (*mustaqīman*), it is a distinctive adjunct of this path of the religion of Islam and which has been used as an adverb in the syntactical arrangement to indicate that being '*mustaqīm*' (straight) is an integral attribute of Islam as a religion. After that, it was said: فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ (So, follow it). It means: 'When you have come to know that the religion of Islam is My path, and that alone is the straight path, you have before you the only path headed towards the desired destination, therefore, this is the path you shall follow.'

After that, it was said: وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ (and do not follow the [other] ways, lest it should take you away from His way). The

word: سُبُل (*subul*) is the plural form of *sabīl* which also means 'way.' The sense of the statement is that the real and true way of reaching Allah Ta'ālā, and achieving His pleasure (*riḍā*) is just one. But, people in this world have carved out different ways on their own depending on what they think it is, or should be. The advice being given is: You do not follow any of these ways because these ways are really not the ways to reach Allah and therefore, whoever walks these ways shall go astray far away from the path of Allah.

It is said in Tafsīr Maẓharī that the purpose of sending the Qur'ān and the Prophet of Islam صلى الله عليه وسلم is to make people subordinate their ideas, intentions and proposals to the Qur'ān and Sunnah and cast their lives into the blessed model offered by them. But, what is happening is that people are bent on moulding the Qur'ān and Sunnah into the frame of their ideas and proposals. As a result, an *Āyah* of the Qur'ān, or a *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم which does not meet their fancy, or is found to be contrary to what they would like it to be, would become the target of their so-called enterpretation until it fits into the mold of their desires. This is the starting point from where emerge other ways which lead people astray - ways which throw them in doubts and innovations in established religion (*shubhāt* and *bid'āt*). These are the ways from which people have been instructed to stay away in this verse.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضى الله عنه, there is a report in Musnad of Dārimī which says: 'Once the Holy Prophet ﷺ drew a vertical line and said: "This is the path of Allah." Then, he drew other lines on its right and left and said: "These are *subul*" (that is, the ways following which has been prohibited in this verse) and, then, he said: "Set upon every one of these ways there is a Shayṭān who, after enticing people away from the straight path, welcomes them to this" (the ways under the charge of Shayṭān, as shown in the drawing). After that, as proof, he recited this verse (153).'

Then, once again towards the end of the verse, it was said: ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may be God-fearing).

This completes the Tafsīr of these three verses and the ten prohibitions delineated therein. Finally, have a look at the significant style

the Holy Qur'ān employs when described at this place were ten injunctions. They do not appear here as ten Articles of Law, something modern law books would love to do. Instead of doing something like that, first it describes five injunctions, then says: ذٰلِكُمْ وَصّٰكُمْ بِهٖ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ (That is what He has emphasized for you, so that you may understand). Then, after having described four more injunctions, it repeats the same sentence with the difference that it says: تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (observe the advice) in place of : تَعْقِلُوْنَ (understand) at the end. And after that, described there is the last injunction in a separate *Āyah* (verse), and once again, repeated there is the same core sentence with the difference that said here is: تَتَّقُوْنَ (be God-fearing) in place of: تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (observe the advice) at the end.

There are many elements of wisdom in this subtle style of the Holy Qur'ān:

First of all, the Holy Qur'ān is not simply a coercive law like the usual laws of this world. In fact, it is a law which is genuinely generous and patronizing in the essential sense. That is why, with every law, suggestions are given which would make them come easy. Then, knowing Allah Ta'ālā and having the concern for *'Ākhirah* are the most effective enforcers of law, in public or in private, and are the only solution human beings have in their problems with law. Therefore, at the end of all the three verses, introduced there are words which would steer human orientation away from the material world and fix it towards Allah Ta'ālā and the *'Ākhirah*.

There are five injunctions described in the first verse (151), that is: (1) To avoid Shirk, (2) to avoid being disobedient to parents, (3) To avoid killing children, (4) To avoid shameful acts, and (5) to avoid killing unjustly. What is used at their end is the word: تَعْقِلُوْنَ (understand) because the people of *Jāhiliyyah* just did not think that there was anything wrong with them. Therefore, it was suggested that they would do well by forsaking their blind following of ancestral customs and their own whims, if they used a little reason.

The second verse (152) describes four injunctions, that is: (1) Not to eat up the property of the orphan by false means, (2) not to weigh or measure short, (3) to be true and just in speech, and (4) to fulfill the covenant of Allah.

These are things, even these ignorant ones knew to be necessary - some of them would even act likewise. But, mostly these were not heeded to. The only remedy of heedlessness is what is called: تَذْكِرَة (*tazkirah*:remembrance) that is, the remembrance of Allah and *'Ākhirah*. Therefore, at the end of this verse, the word used was: تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (observe the advice).

The third verse (153) contains the instruction to follow the straight path and to avoid doing the contrary by following other ways. Since, there is nothing more authentic but the fear of Allah which would tear a human being away from the clutches of his misguiding thoughts and desires, therefore, at the end of it, said there was: لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُوْنَ (so that you may be God-fearing).

Finally, at all these three places, the word used was: وَصِيَّة (*waṣiyyah*) which is an order to do something. Therefore, as cited earlier, some noble *Ṣaḥābah* رضى الله عنهم اجمعين said: Whoever wishes to see the sealed will and testament of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم let him recite these three verses.

Verses 154 - 157

ثُمَّ اٰتَيْنَا مُوْسَى الْكِتٰبَ تَمَامًا عَلَى الَّذِيْٓ اَحْسَنَ وَتَفْصِيْلًا
لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ بِلِقَآءِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾
وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَاتَّقُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ
﴿١٥٥﴾ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْٓا اِنَّمَآ اُنْزِلَ الْكِتٰبُ عَلٰى طَآئِفَتَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا ص
وَاِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ دِرَاسَتِهِمْ لَغٰفِلِيْنَ ﴿١٥٦﴾ اَوْ تَقُوْلُوْا لَوْ اَنَّآ اُنْزِلَ
عَلَيْنَا الْكِتٰبُ لَكُنَّآ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمْ ج فَقَدْ جَآءَكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ
وَهُدًى وَّرَحْمَةٌ ج فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ كَذَّبَ بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ وَصَدَفَ عَنْهَا ط
سَنَجْزِي الَّذِيْنَ يَصْدِفُوْنَ عَنْ اٰيٰتِنَا سُوْٓءَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوْا
يَصْدِفُوْنَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

Then We gave Musa the Book, complete for the one who does good, and explaining everything in detail, and a

guidance and a mercy, so that they may believe in meeting their Lord. [154]

And this is a blessed Book We have sent down. So follow it and fear Allah, so that you may be favoured with mercy, [155] **lest you should say, "The Book was sent down only upon two groups before us, and we were ignorant of what they studied."** [156] **Or you should say, "If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the right path than they." Now there has come to you a clear sign from your Lord, and a guidance and a mercy. So, who is more unjust than the one who belies the verses of Allah and turns away from them? We will recompense those who turn away from Our verses with an evil punishment, because of their turning away.** [157]

Commentary

The reason of being 'ignorant of (or heedless to) what they studied - 156' was not that the Torah and the Injīl were non-existent in the Arabic language because it is possible to become informed of the contents through a translation, in fact, this happens. Instead, this is because the people of the Book never took steps to educate and inform the people of Arabia in the mores of monotheism. That something falls within hearing distance casually is customarily ineffective as a meaningful warning - though, this much note of warning makes search and consideration obligatory, and on this basis, the coming of Divine punishment against the abandonment of *Tauḥīd* (the belief in the Oneness of Allah) was possible. However, this raises no doubts about the universal nature of the prophetic mission of Sayyidnā Mūsā and Sayyidnā 'Isā عليهما السلام, because the particularization of this universality of message is with our master, may the blessing of Allah be upon him, and peace - and this particularization is in terms of the totality of fundamentals and subsidiaries, otherwise, in fundamentals, following all prophets is obligatory on all peoples. So, the punishment would have been proper on this basis. But, this would have been an excuse advanced initially. Now that too is no more valid. The argument of Allah is already established.

As for their second saying: لَوْاَنَّآ اُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْكِتٰبُ لَكُنَّآ اَهْدٰى مِنْهُمْ ('If the Book had been sent down to us, we would have been more adhering to the

right path than they'), a question and its answer has already appeared under the commentary on verse 19 of Sūrah A-Mā'idah earlier in this volume. This concerns the hope of salvation during the period of *Fatrah* or gap between prophets.

Verse 158

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ رَبُّكَ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ
بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ ؕ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا
اِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ اٰمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ اَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِيْٓ اِيْمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ؕ
قُلِ انْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord. The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith. Say, "Wait, of course, we are waiting." [158]

Commentary

The major portion of Sūrah Al-An'ām has been revealed to correct the beliefs and deeds of the people of Makkah and the disbelievers of Arabia and to remove their doubts and to answer questions raised by them.

All through the Sūrah, specially in the previous verses, the people of Makkah and the rest of Arabia were given to understand that they had seen open signs and miracles at the hands of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. They had heard about the prophesies of past books and prophets about him. Then, they had themselves listened to the recitation of the Qur'ān from one totally unlettered (*Ummiyy*) - a standing miracle on its own. Now the avenues of truth lay open before them. The argument of Allah Ta'ālā stood conclusively established against them. Believing was all they needed to do. What else could it be they were waiting for before they would do that?

This subject was eloquently put in the cited verse by saying:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ تَاْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ رَبُّكَ اَوْ يَاْتِيَ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ

(They are waiting for nothing less than that the angels come to them or comes your Lord or come some signs of your Lord).

In other words, it means: 'Are these people waiting to believe only when the angels of death reach them, or are they waiting to be on the plains of Resurrection when Allah Ta'ālā will come to decide destinies, or are they waiting to see some last signs of the coming of the fateful Day of Doom. That the most exalted *Rabb* of all shall appear on the Judgement Day has been mentioned in several verses of the Holy Qur'ān. Speaking in the same terms, a verse from Sūrah Al-Baqarah says:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فِيْ ظُلَلٍ مِّنَ الْغَمَامِ وَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَقُضِيَ الْاَمْرُ

They are looking forward to nothing but that Allah comes upon them in canopies of clouds with the angels and the matter is closed - 2:210.

The state in which Allah Ta'ālā shall appear on the Judgement Day cannot be conceived by human imagination. Therefore, in the case of such verses, the standard creed of the noble *Ṣaḥābah* and righteous elders of the Muslim *Ummah* is that one should believe in what has been mentioned in the Qur'ān, have faith in it, then resign the matter of how it shall come to pass to Divine knowledge. For instance, in the case of the verse quoted above, one should be certain that Allah Ta'ālā will be present on the Day of Judgement - without having to worry about the state and orientation in which this would happen.

Next in the verse, it was said:

يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا اِيْمَانُهَا لَمْ تَكُنْ اٰمَنَتْ مِنْ قَبْلُ اَوْ كَسَبَتْ فِيْٓ اِيْمَانِهَا خَيْرًا ؕ

(The day some signs of your Lord come, the believing of a person will be of no use to him who had never believed before, or had not earned some good through his faith).

The warning given here is that, as soon as some of these signs of Allah appear, the doors of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed. Anyone who had not come to believe before this happens will find his or her declaration of faith after that as unacceptable. As for a person who had be-

lieved before but had done nothing by way of good deeds will find that his or her act of *Taubah* and the resolve to be good in future deeds - after these signs - are not acceptable. In short, that will be ominous time when the *Taubah* of a disbeliever from his disbelief and the *Taubah* of a sinner from his sin and disobedience, even if offered, will not be accepted.

The reason is that *'Īmān* (faith) and *Taubah* (repentance) can be accepted only upto the time it remains within the choice of a person. Once Divine punishment and the reality of the-life-to-come become open to perception, every human being stands compelled to believe and abstain from sin. A faith under duress and a repentance under threat are not acceptable.

There are many verses of the Qur'ān which mention how the people condemned to Hell will start wailing on arrival there. They will make big promises that should they be returned back to the mortal world, they would do nothing but believe and be good in deeds. But, the answer given to them will be: The time for belief and deed is over. What you are saying now is because you have no other choice. This is not valid.

Explaining this verse, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is reported to have said : When comes the last among the signs of the *Qiyāmah* and the sun will rise from the West instead of the East seeing which the disbelievers of the whole world will start saying that they now believe. All those who had been disobedient will turn into the obedient ones. But, at that time, no believing and no repenting will remain worth accepting. (Al-Baghawī on authority from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah)

However, what we do know from the Qur'ānic explanation is the fact that there will be the manifestation of some signs following which the door of *Taubah* (repentance) will be closed - no *Taubah* from a disbeliever or sinner will be accepted after that. But, the Qur'ān itself has not made it clear as to what that sign is.

In the Tafsīr of this verse, there is a *Ḥadīth* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه appearing in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been reported to have said:

> *'Qiyāmah* will not stand established until passes the event

that the sun rises from the West. When people see this sign, they will all believe. This will be the time about which the Qur'ān says - believing then will not benefit anyone.'

The following details about it have been reported in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim as based on a narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudayfah ibn Usayd رضی اللہ عنہ: Once the *Ṣaḥābah* were talking among themselves about the signs of *Qiyāmah* when the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم came in. At that time, he said: *Qiyāmah* will not come in fact until you have seen ten signs: (1) The sun rising from the West, (2) a particular kind of smoke, (3) the animal of the earth, (4) the coming out of Gog and Magog, (5) the coming of 'Īsā علیہ السلام, (6) the coming of Anti-Christ (Dajjāl), (7) the sinking of land at three places - in the East ..., (8) in the West, and ... (9) in the Arabian Peninsula, and (10) a fire which will emerge from an abyss in Eden and will move driving people ahead of it.

And in the Musnad of Aḥmad, it has been reported on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: Out of these signs, the first to come will be the rising of the sun from the West, and the appearance of the animal of the earth.

Imām Al-Qurṭubī, in his *Tazkirah*, and Ḥafiẓ ibn Ḥajar, in Sharḥ al-Bukhārī, while citing a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضی اللہ عنہ, have also reported that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: After this event, that is, after the rising of the sun from the West, the world will keep surviving for one hundred and twenty years. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After these details, there is a question. According to authentic religious reports, when Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام will return to the world, he will invite people to believe. People would believe. Islam will become the religion of the world. It is obvious that, should believing at that time remain unacceptable, this call and the entry of people in the fold of Islam would become meaningless.

In Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī, commentator Ālūsī answers this by saying that the event of the sun rising from the West will take place after the passage of a long time since the appearance of Sayyidnā 'Īsā علیہ السلام - and that would be the time when the door of *Taubah* will close.

'Allāmah Balqīnī and others say that it is not improbable that this

prohibition of faith and repentance being unacceptable, as tied with the rising of the sun from the West, may not remain operative through the last period. It could be that this restriction changes after the passage of some time, and faith and repentance start being acceptable again. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī) (Allah knows best)

To sum up, it can be said that: Though, the sign after the appearance of which *Taubah* will not be acceptable has not been clarified in the present verse, but, from the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, it has become evident that it means the rising of the sun from the West.

Then, remains the question: Why has the Qur'ān itself left it unclarified? According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, the very ambiguity of the Qur'ān at this place is more suited to the task of putting heedless human beings on alert so that they could draw their essential lesson from all forthcoming events of ominous nature and hasten to repent and correct their course of life.

In addition to that, in this ambiguity and brevity, there is the advantage that everyone will be alerted to the danger that the way the door of repentance shall be closed when the sun rises from the West for all human beings, the same way it happens in a miniaturized form when, for everyone personally and individually, the door of *Taubah* is shut close for one at the time of death. This phenomena has been described in another verse of the Holy Qur'ān clearly as well:

وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ حَتّٰى اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ اِنِّىْ تُبْتُ الْئٰنَ

And *Taubah* is not accepted from those who keep committing sins until death visits one of them and they say, 'now I repent - 4-18.'

Explaining this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

اِنَّ تَوْبَةَ الْعَبْدِ تُقْبَلُ مَا لَمْ يُغَرْغِرْ

The *Taubah* of a servant of Allah continues being accepted until comes the agony of death (when Rūḥ comes into the throat and creates a recognizable, parting, hurtling, sound).

This tells us that at the time when man is taking his last breath

and the soul is about to depart from the body - since angels of death come in sight - even then, repentance is not accepted. It is obvious enough that this state of affairs too is a significant sign from Allah. Therefore, included under this verse is this time of death as well - as it is also in the saying of some *'Ulamā'* and other pious elders reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ: مَنْ مَّاتَ فَقَدْ قَامَتْ قِيَامَتُهٗ that is, 'whoever dies, his Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*) has dawned at that very instant.' This is so because the place and time of deeds is all over. What one expects in return for his deeds in his mortal life, he would start seeing a sample from it right from the time he has been lowered into his grave. The Persian poet, Ṣā'ib has put it pithily in poetry:

توبه ہارا نفس باز پسیں دست زدست   بیخبر دیر رسیدی درمحمل بستند

Your repentance after the last breath stands rejected
Unaware man, you are late, the door of the beloved is closed.

Worth noting here is the nuance of the Arabic language in that it was first said in the verse: اَوْ يَاْتِىَ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ (or come some signs of your Lord) and then, by repeating the same sentence, it was said: يَوْمَ يَاْتِىْ بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّكَ لَا يَنْفَعُ نَفْسًا اِيْمَانُهَا (The day come some signs of your Lord, the believing of a person shall be of no use to him). It will be noticed that no pronoun has been used here to make the statement brief. This seems to suggest that: 'بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ' (*Ba'ḍu Āyāt*: some signs) mentioned first are not the same as those mentioned in: 'بَعْضُ اٰيٰتِ' (*Ba'ḍu Āyāt*: some signs) of the second sentence, that is, they are different from each other. This may be a hint towards the substance of the narration from Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah ibn Usayd رضی اللہ عنہ you have read a little earlier in which he has enumerated ten important signs of the coming of *Qiyāmah*, the last of them being the rising of the sun from the West which is symbolic of the discontinuation of the acceptance of *Taubah*.

At the end of the verse, it was said: قُلِ انْتَظِرُوْٓا اِنَّا مُنْتَظِرُوْنَ (Say, "Wait, of course, we are waiting"). The address here is to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم. He is being asked to tell those people that they, despite the arguments of Allah conclusively established against them, still wish to wait for death or the Day of Doom (*Qiyāmah*), then, they are welcome to it. They can wait if they must. As for us, we too shall be waiting to see what their *Rabb* decides to do with them.

Verses 159 - 160

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ ۚ
إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾ مَن
جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا ۖ وَمَن جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا
يُجْزَىٰ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦٠﴾

Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing. [159]

Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompened by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged. [160]

Commentary

As pointed out earlier, a major portion of Sūrah Al-An'ām is devoted to addressing the disbelievers of Makkah and answering questions asked by them. They were told that the straight path to Allah was following the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Before him, during the time of past prophets, salvation depended on following their books and code of laws. The same thing is true today. Today, salvation lies in following nothing but the Sharī'ah brought by him. So, they were asked to become reasonable, take the straight path and avoid exchanging it with paths of error right and left. If they did that, they were warned, these ways of error will throw them far away from the way of Allah.

The first (159) of the two verses carries a general address included wherein are the disbelievers of Arabia, the Jews and Christians and Muslims, all of them. Addressing them, stated there is the sad end of those who turn away from the straight path of Allah - and the instruction given to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is that he should have nothing to do with those who take to the ways of error. Then, out of these, there are those ways of error which take one in a direction totally opposite to what the straight path is, such as the ways of the disbe-

lievers, polytheists and the people of the Book. Then, there are other ways too, which do not, though, take one all the way in the opposite direction, but misguide them any way by pulling them away from the straight path and putting them on ways to the right and left. These are ways of 'doubts' and 'innovations' in the true and settled faith (*Shubhāt* and *Bid'āt*). They too lead one astray.

So, it was said: إِنَّ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا لَّسْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ ۚ إِنَّمَا أَمْرُهُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ (Surely, those who have made divisions in their religion and turned into factions, you have nothing to do with them. Their case rests with Allah alone; then He will tell them what they have been doing).

In this verse, made clear first was that the Messenger of Allah was free of any responsibility concerning those who land themselves into the ways of error. The noble Prophet, may the blessings of Allah, and peace be upon him, had nothing to do with them. Then, they were given the notice of warning that their case was, sufficient to say, in the hands of Allah Ta'ālā, and it was He who would punish them on the day of *Qiyāmah*.

As for 'having made divisions in religion and turning into factions' mentioned in the verse is concerned, it refers to the practice of not following the basic principles of established religion, rather electing to follow personal whims and desires, or become willing victims of Satanic instigations and deceptions, as an outcome of which, one would add something new to it, or leave some of that which is already there.

Stern Warnings against Making Additions in Established Religion

According to Tafsīr Maẓharī, included here are the peoples of the past communities as well, those who had abandoned their basic religion and had added to it things on their own - and with them, there are the deviators and innovators (the partisans of *Bid'ah*) of this *Ummah* too, who keep adding baseless things, on their own, into the Dīn of Islam. About this, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said:

> 'My *Ummah* will face the same conditions faced by the Banī Isrā'īl. The kind of evil practices in which they got involved will also affect the people of my *Ummah*. The Banī Isrā'īl had split into seventy two sects. My *Ummah* will break up into

> seventy three sects - all of them will go to Hell, except one. The *Ṣaḥābah* asked about the group which would be so blessed with salvation. He said: 'مَا أَنَا عَلَيْهِ وَأَصْحَابِي (*mā anā 'alaihi wa aṣḥābī* : That on which am I and my Companions)' - that is, the collective body of people which follows my way and the way of my *Ṣaḥābah* will be blessed with salvation. (This narration from Sayyidnā ibn 'Umar رضی الله عنه has been reported by Tirmidhī and Abū Dāwūd)

Al-Ṭabarānī has reported on sound authority from Sayyidnā Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam رضی الله عنه that he told Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضی الله عنها that the sects mentioned in this verse are the people of Bid'ah (innovators in established religion) who, following their whims and desires, invent new ways in religion. The same view has been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی الله عنه with sound authority. Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم has emphatically prohibited the invention and introduction of new methods in religion on one's own.

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Al-'Irbāḍ ibn Sāriyah, Imām Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and others have reported that the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم said:

> 'Those who live after me will see many differences. Therefore, (I order you that) you should, abiding by my *Sunnah* (way) and the *Sunnah* of my rightly-guided successors (*Khulafā' ar-Rāshidīn*) strictly, keep doing what you do while adhering to nothing but these, avoid the temptation of falling for new methods because everything introduced anew into the religion is *Bid'ah*, and every *Bid'ah* is error and straying.'

In another *Ḥadīth*, he said: 'One who stood separated from the Jamā'ah, even to the measure of a span between the extended thumb and the little finger, he has taken out the band of allegiance to Islam from around his neck. (Abū Dāwūd and Aḥmad)

According to *Tafsīr* Maẓharī, 'Jamā'ah' in this *Ḥadīth* means 'the Jamā'ah of *Ṣaḥābah*,' that is, the collective body or group of the noble Companions of the Holy Prophet صلی الله علیه وسلم. The reason is that Allah Ta'ālā sent our master, Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafa صلی الله علیه وسلم as His *Rasūl*, and gave him the Qur'ān, and blessed him with another (kind of) *Waḥy* (revelation) - which is called the *Ḥadīth* or *Sunnah*. Then, there

are many difficult or brief or ambiguous verses in the Qur'ān. For their Tafsīr or explanation, Allah Ta'ālā promised that He shall have these clarified through His *Rasūl*. The statement: ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ (After that, to make it clear to you is on Us - 75:19) means exactly this.

So, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم explained the difficulties and ambiguities of the Qur'ān and groomed his direct disciples, that is, the *Ṣaḥābah* into the many modes of his *Sunnah* through his word and deed. Therefore, the conduct of the *Ṣaḥābah* as a major collective entity (placed by Divine design into a trail-blazing role as mirrors of their blessed master) is in itself the statement and the explanation of the Divinely-ordained Shari'ah of Islam.

Therefore, it is the good fortune of a Muslim that he or she should follow the *Kitāb* of Allah and the Sunnah of the *Rasūl* of Allah - and whenever one faces a doubt in the meaning of an *'Āyah* of the Qur'ān or the sense of a *Ḥadīth*, one should go by the meaning and sense preferred by the noble *Ṣaḥābah*.

Unfortunately, as a result of people ignoring this sacrosanct rule of conduct, Islam had to see the emergence of different sects which would set aside the proven conduct and explanations of the *Ṣaḥābah* and take the liberty of saying what they wished and declare it to be the very meaning of the Qur'ān and *Sunnah*. These are the ways of error the Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly warned against and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has emphatically prohibited it throughout his blessed life, at times, even castigated those acting against this rule with *la'nah*.

Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah Aṣ-Ṣiddīqah رضى الله عنها reports that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that on six persons he casts his *la'nah*, and may the *la'nah* of Allah be upon them: (1) The person who has added something to the Book of Allah from his side (that is, whether added some words, or carried the meaning to such excessive limits as is contrary to the *Tafsīr* of the *Ṣaḥābah*), (2) the person who has denied the Divinely-ordained destiny, (3) the person who hoists himself into a position of authority over the Muslim *Ummah* by force (or deceit) so that he would honour the person disgraced by Allah, and disgrace the person given honour by Allah, (4) the person who took as Ḥalāl what Allah had made Ḥarām, that is, indulged in killing at the sacred precincts of the Ḥarām in Makkah, or, hunted there, (5) the person who

dishonoured my family and children, and (6) the person who abandoned my *Sunnah*.

Said in the second (160) verse is: مَنْ جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ عَشْرُ اَمْثَالِهَا وَمَنْ جَآءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزٰٓى اِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ (Whoever comes with a good deed, receives ten times as much, and whoever comes with an evil deed, he will not be recompensed by anything but its equal, and they shall not be wronged).

Stated in the previous verse (159) was that the punishment for the evil deeds of those who turn away from the straight path rested with Allah alone.

In the present verse, the generous procedure of reward and punishment in the Hereafter has been described by saying that a person who does one good deed will get ten times more in return - and a person who commits one sin, the return for him will be equal to that of one sin.

As reported in the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī and Muslim and in Nasā'ī and the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Most Exalted and Very Merciful is your *Rabb*. A person who intends to do a good deed has one good recorded in his Book of Deeds - even if he does not get around to do it. Following that, when he gets to do that good deed, ten good deeds are recorded in his Book of Deeds. And if a person intends to do a sin, then stays back and does not do it, still a good is recorded for him - and if he were to actually commit a sin, still what he gets registered in his name is one sin, or that too is erased. With this showering of grace and mercy in the presence of Allah, who can apprehend total destruction? Unless, of course, there be that rare person who is determined to be destroyed. (Ibn Kathīr)

In a *Ḥadīth Qudsī* narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضى الله عنه, it is said:

> 'A person who does one good deed gets the reward of ten, even more - and a person who commits one sin will get its punishment equal to one sin only, or I shall forgive even that. And a person who comes to Me with sins which would fill the whole earth, and still seeks forgiveness, I shall treat him with matching forgiveness. And a person who comes closer towards

> Me to the measure of one hand finger-span, I step one hand-span towards him. And a person who steps one hand-span toward Me, I come towards him by the measure of one Bā' (the stretch of both hands). And the person who comes walking towards Me, towards him I come running.'

From these *Ḥadīth* narrations, we can see that the increase of ten times for one good deed as mentioned in this verse is actually a description of its base limit - and Allah Ta'ālā, in His mercy and generosity, may give even more than that, and shall give, as proved by other narrations which place it upto the level of seventy times or seven hundred times.

In the words of the verse, it is noteworthy that the expression used is: جَآءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ ('comes with a good deed') and not: عَمِلَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ (does a good deed). According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, this indicates that such reward or punishment will not be awarded just on having done something good or bad. Instead of that, the condition is that to deserve reward or punishment, a good or bad deed must survive as such until the time of death. The outcome is that a person who has done a good deed, but it gets destroyed because of the misfortune of some sin, then, he no longer remains deserving of reward against this deed. An example of it is, God forbid, that of *Shirk* and *Kufr* which, in fact, destroy all good deeds. In addition to that there are many other sins which make some good deeds turn false and ineffectual - as it appears in the Holy Qur'ān: لَا تُبْطِلُوْا صَدَقٰتِكُمْ بِالْمَنِّ وَالْاَذٰى (do not nullify your charities by boasting about favour, and teasing -2:264).

This tells us that the good deed of charity (*ṣadaqah*) gets nullified and wasted by boasting about the favour done or by causing hurt through teasing and underrating the recepient. Similarly, it appears in *Ḥadīth* that sitting in the *Masjid* and talking about worldly things eats up good deeds as fire eats up the wood. This tells us that good deeds, such as, *Nafl*, *Tasbīḥ* and *Dhikr*, go to waste by indulging in mundane conversation.

Similar is the case of evil deeds which, if repented from, become the cause of the sin being erased from the Book of Deeds - it does not keep sticking to a person until the time of death. Therefore, not said in the verse was something like: 'does any deed, good or bad, for which

there will be punishment or reward.' Instead, what was said, in effect, was: Whoever brings to Us a good deed will get a reward ten times as much and whoever brings to Us an evil deed, then, it will be only one deed he will be punished for. The point is that this act of bringing to Allah Ta'ālā can become possible only when this deed remains intact and unharmed right through the end. The crucial thing is that it survives, that nothing happens in between which will cause the good deed to be spoiled or wasted - and of course, the method is to keep repenting and seeking the forgiveness of Allah Ta'ālā from falling into any evil deed.

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُوْنَ (and they shall not be wronged). It means that this is no human court. This is the Highest of the high. No probability of any injustice to anyone exists there, nor can there be a decrease in the return for someone's good deed, nor is there any possibility of an increase in the punishment for someone's evil deed.

Verses 161 - 165

قُلْ إِنَّنِىْ هَدٰىنِىْ رَبِّىْٓ إِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۚ دِيْنًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ
إِبْرٰهِيْمَ حَنِيْفًا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِيْنَ ﴿١٦١﴾ قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِىْ
وَنُسُكِىْ وَمَحْيَاىَ وَمَمَاتِىْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٢﴾ لَا شَرِيْكَ
لَهٗ ۚ وَبِذٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ
أَبْغِىْ رَبًّا وَّهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَىْءٍ ۗ وَلَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ إِلَّا
عَلَيْهَا ۚ وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ أُخْرٰى ۚ ثُمَّ إِلٰى رَبِّكُمْ مَّرْجِعُكُمْ
فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيْهِ تَخْتَلِفُوْنَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ جَعَلَكُمْ
خَلٰٓئِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِىْ
مَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ ۖ وَإِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٦٥﴾

Say, "As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path: the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah. [161]

Say, "My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [162] **For Him there is no partner. And this I have been commanded, and I am the first one to submit."** [163]

Say, "Should I seek a lord other than Allah when He is the Lord of everything? And nobody does anything but to his own account, and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another, then to your Lord is your return. Then He will tell you about what you were disputing in. [164]

And it is He who made you the viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over others, so that He may test you in what He has given you. Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing and - surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful. [165]

Commentary

These are the last five verses of Sūrah Al-An'ām. It will be recalled from previous verses how people had altered the true religion through a process of excess and deficiency, making many more out of it, and had themselves split into factions and groups. In contrast, the first three of the present verses present an authentic profile of the true religion describing its fundamental principles, and some important subsidiaries and details. The first two verses carry the principle while the third mentions their subsidiaries - and in both, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم where he has been asked to convey the message to these people.

In the first verse it has been said: قُلْ إِنَّنِي هَدٰىنِي رَبِّيٓ إِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ (As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path). The hint given here is that he has not taken this path prompted like them by their own ideas or under the weight of ancestral customs. Instead of that, this is a way to which he has been directed by his Lord. Then, by using the word: رب (*Rabb*, the essential nurturer, benefactor and carer under all conditions, unfortunately not expressed through any equivalent in English), it was indicated that it is the very dictate of His beneficence that He guides to the right path. Those who look for guidance will have guidance from Him.

In the second verse (162), it was said: دِينًا قِيَمًا مِّلَّةَ إِبْرٰهِيمَ حَنِيفًا ۚ وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

(the straight religion, the faith of Ibrāhīm, the upright; and he was not of those who associate partners with Allah). Here, the word: قِيَمٌ (*qiyam*) is a verbal noun in the sense of: قِيَامٌ (*qiyām*) meaning what stands established on strong and secure foundation. In other words, this religion is fortified. It stands on God-sent basics. This is no compedium of someone's personal ideas. Then, it is not some strange new religion either lending itself to doubting eyebrows. This has been the religion of all past prophets, may peace be upon them all. That the name of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام has been particularly mentioned here is because all religions in the world admit his greatness and religious patriarchy. Among the groups of the time, the Jews, the Christians and the disbelievers of Arabia - no matter how different from each other they may be - they were still unanimous in paying homage to the great spiritual station of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. And this spiritual station of leadership has been given to him by Allah Ta'ālā as a special reward: اِنِّیْ جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ اِمَامًا (I am going to make you an Imām for the people - 2:124).

Then, every sect from them tried to prove that they were staunch adherents of the religion of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام and were part of his Community. To remove their misgiving, it was said that Ibrāhīm عليه السلام had the distinction of always abstaining from bowing before anyone other than Allah and he had a distaste for all kinds of *Shirk* which led people to associate partners in His pristine Divinity. This conduct was the greatest achievement of his life. In sharp contrast to him, here you are all soaked in *Shirk*. Everyone took someone as partners with Allah - the Jews did that with Sayyidnā 'Uzayr رضى الله عنه, the Christians with Sayyidnā 'Īsā عليه السلام and the disbelievers of Arabia were so liberal that they took thousands of rocks to be partners in the Divinity of Allah. In this state of affairs, no one had the right to claim that they were adhering to the ideal of the spiritual community of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام - except Muslims. They shun *Shirk* and *Kufr*.

In the third verse (163), it was said: قُلْ اِنَّ صَلَاتِیْ وَنُسُكِیْ وَمَحْيَایَ وَمَمَاتِیْ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (Say, "My prayer, my offering, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds). The word: نُسُكٌ (*nusuk*) in this verse means sacrifice. Everything one does in Ḥajj is also called: *Nusuk*. So, the rites of Ḥajj are known as *Manāsik*, the plural of *Nusuk*. Then, this word is also used for *'Ibadah* or worship of Allah in the absolute sense.

Therefore, *Nāsik* is used in the sense of *'Ābid* (one who worships Allah). At this place, any of the meanings given above can be applied. *Tafsīrs* to that effect have been reported from commentators among the *Ṣaḥābah* and *Tābi'īn*. But, *'Ibādah* or offering of acts of worship devoted to Allah, taken in the absolute sense, appears to be the more appropriate meaning at this place. In that case, the meaning of the verse would be: 'My prayer, my offerings in *'Ibādah*, my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds.'

Out of the subsidiaries of deeds, the first to be mentioned here was Ṣalāh because that is the moving spirit of all good deeds and is, of course, the pillar of the religion. Mentioned briefly after that were all deeds and acts of worship. Then, rising to a wider level, everything done or faced in a lifetime was pointed to. The last to be mentioned was death. After having identified all these, it was admitted that they are only for Allah who is the Lord of all the worlds and who has no associate or partner in His Divinity. And this is the outcome of perfect faith and perfect sincerity. This leads one to think, care and keep in sight, in all states of life and in everything one does, that: 'my *Rabb*, and the *Rabb* of the whole wide world is One *Rabb*. I am His servant. I am in His sight - all the time. Let not my heart, my mind, my eyes, my ears, my tongue, and hands, and feet, nor my pen or step, move in any direction against His pleasure.' This is a simple meditation (*Murāqabah*) of the highest order, something which, if one trains himself to keep present in one's heart and mind, then, there is no doubt that he or she will become a human being in the real sense. Things like sin and disobedience and crimes will be scared to come anywhere even close to a person that strong.

In Tafsīr Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr, under the commentary on this verse, it has been reported that the well-known *Ṣaḥābī*, Sayyidnā Abū Mūsā Al-Ash'arī رضی اللہ عنہ used to say: "I honestly wish that every Muslim would keep reciting this verse time and again, almost making it the constant formula of his or her life."

In this verse, the statement - that the prayers and the rest of acts of worship are for Allah - very obviously means that these should be free from any Shirk or hypocricy or any other worldly interest. As for life and death being for Allah, it could also mean : 'When my very life

and death are in His control, then, what I do in my physical and spiritual life (*a'māl and 'ibādāt*), has to be for Him alone.' And it could also mean: 'Whatever deeds are tied with life are for Allah alone - such as, *Ṣalāh*, *Ṣawm*, rights and duties involved in dealings with people etc. Then, deeds which relate to death - such as, a will (*waṣiyyah*) and the concept of an ideal life one longs for - then, they too are for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, and subordinate to what He has commanded.'

After that it was said: وَبِذٰلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ (And this I have been commanded and I am the first one to submit). It means that 'in this *Ummah*, I am the first Muslim' - because the first Muslim (one who submits) in every *Ummah* is the *Nabiyy* (prophet) or *Rasūl* (Messenger) himself to whom the Sharī'ah (religious code of guidance) is revealed through *Waḥy* (revelation).

There could be a hint in the expression 'first Muslim,' towards the saying that the first to be created was the blessed Nūr (light) of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, after which the heavens and the earth and the rest of creation came into existence - as it appears in a *Ḥadīth* with the words: أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ تَعَالٰى نُوْرِىْ (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī).

One's Burden of Sin Cannot Be Borne By Another

The disbelievers of Makkah, with Walīd ibn Mughīrah among them, used to say to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and to the Muslims in general that they should return to their faith and they will bear the burden of all their sins. This has been answered in the fourth verse (164). It was said: قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ أَبْغِيْ رَبًّا وَّهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ Here, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He is being asked to tell them: 'Do you want me that I too, like yourself, seek and find some other *Rabb*, other than Allah, when He is the Lord of everything?. This is error and straying which you should not expect me to accept. As for your saying that you will bear the burden of our sins, this is absurd in itself. A sin committed by a person will be written in that person's record of deeds, and it will be he or she who will deserve its punishment. How can that sin be transferred to your account just by your saying so? And if the idea is that the sins will go in our account and in our Book of Deeds, but the punishment to be given against these will be borne by you, then, that idea is not valid either.' The next sentence in the verse rejects it. It was said: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ أُخْرٰى that is, (on the day of *Qiyāmah*) no

bearer of burden (of sin) shall bear the burden of another).

As for the disbelievers, this verse does answer their absurd saying in its own way. But, it also tells Muslims at large about the rule that they too should not take the matters of *Qiyāmah* on the analogy of their ways in the mortal world where one person commits a crime and succeeds in putting it on someone else - specially when the other person is willing to accept it. But, in the great Court of Allah, there is no room for it. There, the other person can never be caught for the sin committed by someone else. It is based on the authority of this verse that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said that the child born out of wedlock will not be affected by the sin of his or her parents. (This *Ḥadīth* has been reported by Ḥākim from Sayyidah 'A'ishah رضى الله عنها based on sound authority)

When Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه saw someone crying at the *Janāzah* of a deceased person, he said that the crying of the living causes punishment to the deceased. Ibn Abī Mulaykah says that, when he reported this saying to Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها, she said: You are reporting the saying of a person who never lies, nor can there be any doubt in his integrity. But, there are occasions when one does not hear right. In this matter, the decisive verdict of the Qur'ān is sufficient for you: وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى , that is, the sin of one person cannot be applied to another. So, how can the crying of a living person cause punishment to descend on a dead person just for no reason? (Ad-Durr Al-Manthūr)

At the conclusion of the verse, it was said that, finally they have to go to their Lord after all where they will find out the ultimate verdict on all their differences - which means that they would be better off keeping their verbal confrontation in check and devoting more to the end of things.

In the fifth (164) verse, Sūrah Al-An'ām reaches its end at a comprehensive note of advice. It brings the past history of peoples and their times into focus and invites attention to a projection towards the future by saying: وَهُوَالَّذِىْ جَعَلَكُمْ خَلٰٓئِفَ الْاَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجٰتٍ (And it is He who made you viceregents of the earth and raised some of you in ranks over some others). Here, the word: خَلٰٓئِفَ (*khalā'if*) is the plural form of *khalīfah* which means viceregent or deputy. The sense of the verse is:

It is Allah Ta'ālā who has let you inhabit places occupied by peoples before you. There is no home, no land which you call your private property today, and believe to be so, which was not, only yesterday, under the ownership of other human beings like you. Allah Ta'ālā has, by removing them, made you sit in their place. Then, worth keeping in mind all the time is the fact of life that everyone among you too is not alike. One is poor, the other is rich. One is low, the other is high. And equally obvious is the fact that, had being rich or being low been within one's control, who would have chosen to remain poor and low? This distance among steps and this difference in ranks is knocking at your doors to tell you that this power, control and choice is in the hands of some other Being who can make anyone poor, if He so wills; make anyone rich, if He so wills; give honour to whom He wills and let whoever He wills be low.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا اٰتٰـكُمْ (so that He may test you in what He has given you). It means: By making you take the place of others, and by making you owners of their wealth and property, and then, by keeping you at different steps in terms of honour and wealth, the very aim is to make you open your eyes to this framework of trial which seeks to determine your reaction to this phenomena that blessings which once belonged to past peoples have now been entrusted in your hands. To be seen is what it would be - that of gratitude and obedience, or that of ingratitude and disobedience?

At the conclusion of the fifth and the last (165) verse, the end of both these stances was made clear by saying: اِنَّ رَبَّكَ سَرِيْعُ الْعِقَابِ وَاِنَّهٗ لَغَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (Surely, your Lord is swift in punishing - and surely He is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful). In other words, it means: Your Lord is going to send His punishment on the disobedient soon - and for the obedient, He is Forgiving and Merciful.

Sūrah Al-An'ām began with *Ḥamd* (the praise of Allah) and concluded on *Maghfirah* (the seeking of forgiveness from Allah). May Allah Ta'ālā bless all of us with the Taufīq (ability bestowed by Allah) of *Ḥamd*, and honour us with *Maghfirah* from Him.

It appears in *Ḥadīth* that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Sūrah Al-An'ām, the whole of it, was revealed at one time. Such was the majesty of its revelation that seventy thousand angels followed behind it

reciting *Tasbīh* (glorifying Allah). Therefore, Sayyidna Fārūq al-Ā'ẓam said: Sūrah Al-An'ām is one of the highly merited Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'an.

In some narrations, it has been reported from Sayyidnā 'Alī رضی اللہ عنہ that Allah Ta'ālā would become the healer of the sick person over whom this Sūrah is recited.

وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوَانَا اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

The Commentary on
Sūrah Al-An'ām
ends here

Sūrah Al-A'rāf

[The Heights]

[Sūratul-A'rāf was revealed in Makkah and it has 206 Verses and 20 Sections]

Verses 1 - 7

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

الٓمّٓصٓ ﴿١﴾ كِتٰبٌ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ فَلَا يَكُنْ فِىْ صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ
لِتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ وَذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٢﴾ اِتَّبِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنْ
رَّبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوْا مِنْ دُوْنِهٖٓ اَوْلِيَآءَ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾
وَكَمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَا فَجَآءَهَا بَاْسُنَا بَيَاتًا اَوْ هُمْ قَآئِلُوْنَ
﴿٤﴾ فَمَا كَانَ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اِذْ جَآءَهُمْ بَاْسُنَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا
ظٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٥﴾ فَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْـَٔلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ
﴿٦﴾ فَلَنَقُصَّنَّ عَلَيْهِمْ بِعِلْمٍ وَّمَا كُنَّا غَآئِبِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Alif, Lām, Mīm, Ṣād. [1] **(This is) A Book sent down to you - so, let there be no constraint on your heart because of it - that you may warn through it, and (it is) an advice for the believers.** [2]

Follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow any friends other than Him. Little you are receptive to advice! [3]

How many a town We have destroyed, and Our punishment came upon them at night or while they were having midday nap. [4] **So, their cry, when Our punishment came upon them, was not but that they said, "we were wrongdoers indeed."** [5]

So, We shall ask those to whom the messengers were sent and We shall ask the messengers. [6] **Then We shall tell them the whole story, with knowledge, and We were never absent.** [7]

Commentary

An overview of the Sūrah shows that most of the subjects it deals with are related to *Ma'ād* (Return to the Hereafter) and *Risālah* (Prophethood). The former appear from the beginning of the Sūrah upto approximately the end of the sixth section. Then, from the eighth to the twenty first section, there is a detailed description of past prophets, events about their communities, their reward and punishment and the punishment which overtook them.

In the statement: فَلَا يَكُنْ فِي صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ appearing in the first verse, the address is to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم and he has been told: This Qur'ān is the Book of Allah sent down to you. This should not cause any constraint on your heart. The word: حَرَجٌ (*ḥaraj*) translated here as 'constraint' means that 'you should have no anguish or apprehension in conveying the Qur'ān and its injunctions lest people belie it and hurt you.' (As reported from Abū Al-'Āliyah - Maẓharī)

The hint given here is that Allah who has sent down this Book on you has also made arrangements that you shall remain protected and that takes care of any anguish on your part. Some commentators have said that '*ḥaraj*' or 'constraint on the heart' refers to the constraint experienced by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who, because of his affectionate concern for people, felt pain when they would not believe despite having heard the Qur'ān and its injunctions. To offset this constraint, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been told that the duty with which he has been obligated is simply to make the call and convey the message. Once this is done, it is not his responsibility to see who becomes a Muslim and who does not. Therefore, there was no reason for him to be anxious.

The statement: فَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اُرْسِلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَنَسْئَلَنَّ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ in verse 6 refers to the day of *Qiyāmah* when people will be asked by Allah how did they receive the messengers and Books sent to them by Him - and the messengers will be asked if they did convey to their communities the message and injunctions Allah had sent them with. (Narrated by Baihaqī from

Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ - Maẓharī)

It appears in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim on the authority of a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir رضی اللہ عنہ that the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم asked people during the address of his Last Ḥajj: When, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, you will be asked about me - whether or not I have conveyed the message of Allah to you - what will you, then, say in reply? (فَمَا اَنْتُمْ قَائِلُوْنَ). All Ṣaḥabah present there said: We will say that you have conveyed the message of Allah to us and you have fulfilled the trust of Allah at its best and you have wished and done what was most beneficial for the community. Hearing this, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: اَللّٰهُمَّ اشْهَدْ (O Allah, You be witness).

According to a narration in the Musnad of Aḥmad, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, Allah Ta'ālā will ask me if I have conveyed His message to His servants and I shall say in response: Yes, I have. Therefore, all of you should make sure that those who are present do convey my message to those absent. (Maẓharī)

'Those absent' refers to people who were present during that time but were not present at that particular occasion - as well as generations which would come later on. To convey to them the message of the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم means that people of every time should continue the chain of conveying this message to the generations coming next, so that all children of Adam to be born right through the day of *Qiyāmah* will have received this message.

Verses 8 - 10

وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذِ الْحَقُّ ۚ فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿٨﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَظْلِمُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ مَكَّنّٰكُمْ فِى الْاَرْضِ وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيْهَا مَعَايِشَ ۗ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾

And the Weighing on that day is definite. So, those whose scales are heavy, they are the successful. [8] **And those whose scales are light, they are those who have**

brought loss to themselves, as they used to be unjust to Our verses. [9]

And We gave you a place on earth, and made for you therein the means of living. Little you are grateful. [10]

Commentary

In the first verse, it was said: وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ (And the Weighing on that day is definite). It means that the weighing of good and bad deeds on the day of Judgement is due and true. There is no room for doubt in it. Here, the hint given is that let no one be deceived by the idea that things which usually get to be weighed or measured are things having some weight or heaviness. Human deeds, good or bad, have no body or mass which could be weighed. How, then, would deeds be weighed? First of all, the reason is that the authority of Allah is absolute. He is powerful over everything. Why then, would it be necessary that something we cannot weigh could not be weighed by Allah Almighty as well? Then, other than that, we have before us, in our time, countless new instruments which claim to weigh or measure anything in the world. They no more need the traditional balance or scales or rod or tip. Modern instruments can weigh what nobody ever thought could be weighed, air, electric current, heat, cold, and so many other things. A meter is all you need. Now, if Allah Almighty, the Maker of makers, in His perfect power, could weigh or measure human deeds - with or without a device - what is there in it which would make it to be something far out to believe? Leaving this aside for a moment, the Creator of the Universe does have the power to transform our deeds at some time into a material presence, even give it some shape or form (interesting that people would believe something like this happening in a Speilberg movie, yet squirm at the religious view of things as would come to pass). There are many Āḥadīth from the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم which confirm that human deeds will appear in particular shapes and forms during *Barzakh* (the post-death ~ pre-resurrection state) and *Maḥshar* (Resurrection). Good deeds of a person will, in forms beautified, become the companions of the grave - and evil deeds would crawl all over in the form of snakes and scorpions. A Ḥadīth says that a person who has not paid the Zakah due against his wealth, that wealth will reach his grave in the shape of a poisonous snake to bite him and say: I am your wealth, I am your treasure.

It is said in a Ṣaḥīḥ Ḥadīth that Al-Baqarah and 'Āl-'Imrān, the two Sūrahs of the Holy Qur'ān will come on the plains of Resurrection in the form of two dense clouds and cast their shade over those who used to recite these Sūrahs.

Similarly, there are countless narrations from Ḥadīth, all authentic and reported reliably, which indicate that once these good and bad deeds of ours pass away from this mortal world, they will transform into particular shapes and forms and be there on the plains of Resurrection in a material presence.

There are even verses of the Qur'ān which confirm it. It is said: وَوَجَدُوْا مَا عَمِلُوْا حَاضِرًا , that is, 'what people had done in the world, they would find that present there - 18:49.' In a verse of Sūrah Az-Zalzalah, it is said: مَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَّرَهٗ وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَّرَهٗ, that is, 'whoever does good even the weight of a particle shall see it on the day of *Qiyāmah*, and whoever does evil even the weight of a particle shall see that too in *Qiyāmah*.' Things as described here obviously lend to the possibility that human deeds will come in some nuclear form of existence. This is something which needs no further enterpretations as what is crucial is the compensation of deeds which will exist and be perceptible.

Under these circumstances, weighing deeds does not remain something difficult or far out. But, human beings are what they are. Given their limited framework of reasoning, they take everything on the analogy of their own present state of being and this is the criterion they have to judge things around them. So used to it they are that they just cannot act otherwise. It is this state of being of theirs which the Qur'ān has put in words which appear in Sūrah Ar-Rūm: يَعْلَمُوْنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ هُمْ عَنِ الْاٰخِرَةِ هُمْ غٰفِلُوْنَ . It means that 'these people know an obvious aspect of mortal life (and that too, not the whole of it) and about the Hereafter they are totally heedless - 30:7.' In their onslaught on the obvious and the peceptible, they will shake the earth and the space to find out the unfound, but the great field of the reality of things the unfolding of which has to take place in the 'Ākhirah is something they are totally unaware of.

Therefore, in this verse, special care has been taken while saying: وَالْوَزْنُ يَوْمَئِذِ اِلْحَقُّ (And the Weighing on that day is definite) so that man, all infatuated with the obvious, may not be able to deny the weighing of

deeds in the Hereafter - which stands proved from the Holy Qur'ān and is the collective belief of the Muslim Ummah.

That there will be the weighing of deeds on the day of *Qiyāmah* is a subject dealt with in many verses of the Holy Qur'ān from various angles, and in Ḥadīth, its details abound.

The Weighing of Deeds : A Doubt and its Answer

Out of the details on the weighing of deeds appearing in the Āḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the first to ponder about is the oft-narrated statement that, on the day of Resurrection, the heaviest in weight shall be the Kalimah: لَا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ (There is no god but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). The scalepan which holds this Kalimah shall outweigh the rest.

Tirmidhi, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥibbān, Baihaqī and Ḥākim have reported from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A man of my Ummah will be brought before the entire creation on the plain of Resurrection. Then, ninety nine of his Books of Deeds will be brought in. Each scroll of his Book of Deeds will be as long as far he could see - and all these Books of Deeds shall be full of sins and evils. This person will be asked if everything written in these Books of Deeds was correct, or had the angels done any injustice to him, or had they written anything there which was not as it happened. He will admit: O my Lord, whatever is written there is correct. But, in his heart, he will be nervous while worrying about how would he find his deliverance from this situation. That will be the time Allah Ta'ālā will say: Today, there is no injustice for anyone. Against all your sins, We have a testimonial of your being good, with Us, written where, is your Kalimah: أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَّا إِلٰهَ إِلَّا اللّٰهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا عَبْدُهٗ وَرَسُوْلُهٗ (I testify that there is no god but Allah and I testify that Muhammad ﷺ is His servant and His Messenger). That person will say: O my Lord, what weight this little note will carry against such a big black Book of Deeds? Then, it would be said: No injustice will be done to you. Then, all those Books of Deeds full of sins will be placed in one scalepan and in the other, this note with the Kalimah of 'Īmān on it. The scalepan with the Kalimah on it shall weigh heavier and the scalepan with all those sins on it shall turn to be lighter. After having related this event, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Nothing can weigh more than the

name of Allah. (Maẓharī)

According to a narration from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه in Musnad al-Bazzār and Mustadrak Ḥākim, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: At the time of his death, Nuḥ عليه السلام assembled his sons around him and said: I order you to abide by the Kalimah: لا اله الا الله (*Lā Ilāha Illallāh*) because, should the heavens and the earth be placed in one pan of the scale and the Kalimah: *Lā Ilāha Illallāh* in the other, the pan containing the Kalimah shall invariably remain heavier. Other narrations on the same subject have been reported from Sayyidnā Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī, Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and Sayyidnā Abū-ad-Dardā' رضى الله عنه supported by reliable transmitting authorities and are spread over in various Ḥadīth collections. (Maẓharī)

According to these narrations, a believing Muslim who recites the Kalimah shall always find the scale heavier in his favour, no matter how many sins he carries on him. But, many other verses of the Qur'ān and narrations of Ḥadīth prove that the good and bad deeds of a Muslim shall be weighed. For some, the scalepan with good deeds will be heavier, for some others, that of sins. The one whose scalepan with good deeds is heavier will have his salvation while the one whose scalepan with sins and evils is heavier will have his punishment. For example, in Sūrah Al-Anbiyā' it is said:

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِيْنَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَّاِنْ كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ اَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفٰى بِنَا حٰسِبِيْنَ ،

And We shall set up Scales of Justice on the day of Judgement. Then, not the least injustice will be done to anyone. And if there be (good or bad) the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it (to account on the scale for deeds) and We are sufficient to take account - 21:47.

And in Sūrah Al-Qāri'ah, it is said:

فَاَمَّا مَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَهُوَ فِيْ عِيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ وَاَمَّا مَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِيْنُهٗ فَاُمُّهٗ هَاوِيَةٌ

Whoever has his scale of good deeds heavy will be in life blissful and whoever has his scale of good deeds lighter, his place will be Hell -101:6-9.

Explaining these verses, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ said: The believer whose good deeds on the scale are heavier will go to *Jannah* with his deeds - and the one whose evil deeds on the scale are heavier will be sent to Jahannam with his deeds. (Reported by Al-Baihaqī in Shu'ab al-'Īmān - Maẓharī)

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, it has been reported in Abū Dāwūd: If a shortage is found in the *Farā'iḍ* of a servant, Allah Ta'ālā will ask if that servant has some *Nawāfil* to his credit. If they are there, the shortage of the obligatory will be compensated by the voluntary. (Maẓharī)

The outcome of all these verses and Ḥadīth narrations is that the scale will some times be heavier in favour of a believer and lighter at some others. Therefore, scholars of Tafsīr say that this shows that weighing in *Maḥshar* (Resurrection) will be twice. First to be weighed will be belief and disbelief through which distinction will be made between a believer and a disbeliever. In this weighing whoever has even just the declaration of faith (Kalimah) in the Book of Deeds, his or her scale will become heavier and he or she will be separated from the group of disbelievers. Then, there will be a second weighing of good and bad deeds. In this, the good deeds of one believer will be heavy on the scale while the other will find the scale heavy with evil deeds - and everyone will have his or her punishment or reward in accordance with that. Thus, the subject as dealt with in all these verses and narrations of Ḥadīth becomes synchronized. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

How Would Deeds Be Weighed?

According to a Ḥadīth narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ which appears in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, there will come some heavy people whose weight, in the sight of Allah, will not be worth the weight of even a mosquito - and, in support, he recited the verse of the Qur'ān: فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ وَزْنًا that is, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, We will not give them any weight - 18:105 (Maẓharī).

And featuring the virtues (*manāqib*) of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mas'ūd رضی اللہ عنہ, there is a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم is reported to have said: His legs look so thin but, by Him in whose hands lies my life, on the balance of justice for the day of *Qiyāmah*,

their weight shall be more than the weight of the mountain of Uḥud.

Then, there is the Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضى الله عنه with which Imām al-Bukhārī has concluded his book, the Ṣaḥīḥ. In it, it is said that there are two words very light when said but very heavy when weighed on the Scale of Deeds, and with Allah, they are dear, and they are: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَبِحَمْدِهٖ (*Subḥānallāhi wa bi-ḥamdihī* : Pure is Allah and Praised is He) سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ الْعَظِيْمِ (*Subḥanallahil-'Aẓīm* : Pure is Allah the Great).

As narrated by Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم used to say that saying: سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ (*Subḥān Allah*) fills half of the pan on the scale of deeds while saying: اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (*Alḥamdulillah*) fills the other half.

Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī and Ibn Ḥibbān report with sound authority from Sayyidnā Abū-d-Dardā' رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: No deed will be heavier than good morals on the scale of deeds.

And to Sayyidnā Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī رضى الله عنه, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: I tell you about two things doing which is not hard for anyone - but, on the scale of deeds, they shall be the heaviest -(1) good morals, and (2) usually observing silence, that is, not talking unless necessary.

In his Kitāb al-Zuhd, Imām Aḥmad has reported from Sayyidnā Ḥāzim رضى الله عنه that angel, Jibra'īl al-Amīn came to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم while someone there was weeping in fear of Allah. Angel Jibra'īl said: All human deeds will be weighed, but human tears flowing from the fear of Allah and 'Ākhirah is a deed which would not be weighed. Rather, one such tear would put off the wildest fire of Jahannam. (Maẓharī)

A Ḥadīth says about a person present on the plain of Resurrection. When he will look at his Book of Deeds, he will notice very few good deeds there. He will be nervous. All of a sudden, something will rise like a cloud and fall right into the scalepan of his good deeds. He will be told that this was in return for his teaching of the faith which multiplied onwards when people acted in accordance with it, and there was a share kept aside for him with each single follower of his

teaching. (Mazharī, from Sayyidnā Ibn al-Mubārak)

Tabarānī reports from Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: A person who goes to the graveyard with the Janāzah, two karats will be placed on his scale of deeds. Other narrations say that the weight of this karat will be equal to the mountain of Uḥud.

He has also reported from Sayyidnā Jābir رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: One's first deed to be placed on the scale of deeds will be the good deed of spending on one's family and taking care of their needs.

Imām al-Dhahabī has reported from Sayyidnā 'Imrān ibn Ḥuṣayn عليه السلام that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: On the day of *Qiyāmah*, when the ink used by the 'Ulamā to write about the religion and its rules will be weighed against the blood of *shuhadā'* (martyrs), the weight of the ink used by 'Ulama will turn out to be more than the weight of the blood of martyrs.

There are many more Aḥādīth relating to the weighing of deeds as in *Qiyāmah*. Some of them have been mentioned here as they shed light on the merit and worth of particular deeds.

The mode of weighing deeds as mentioned in these narrations of Ḥadīth seems to be different. Some indicate that the doers of deeds will be the ones weighed and it will be they who would be heavy or light according to their deeds. Some others show that their Books of Deeds will be weighed. Still others prove that deeds themselves would become personified and they will be measured. Tafsīr authority, Ibn Kathīr, after having reported all these narrations, has said that it is possible that the weighing is repeated several times in different ways and, it is obvious, the full reality of these matters is known to Allah Ta'ālā alone - and for doing what one does in real life, it is, for all practical purposes, not necessary to know this reality. Quite sufficient for us is to know that our deeds shall be weighed. If our deeds turn out to be lighter on the scale of deeds, we shall deserve punishment. Then, it is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His grace, by Himself, or by the intercession of a Nabiyy or Waliyy, forgives us our sins and we stand delivered from punishment.

As for the likelihood that some people will have their salvation on the sole virtue of their having said and believed in the Kalimah of 'Īmān (*Lā Illāha Illallāh*) and all sins accruing to them will be forgiven because of that - as narrated in some of these narrations - that belongs to the exception mentioned above and which is beyond the general regulation and is a special manifestation of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

In the two verses the Tafsīr of which you have just read through, sinners were warned against the disgrace on the plain of Resurrection and the Divine punishment that would come in its wake. Then comes the third verse which mentions the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and persuades people to accept truth and act accordingly by suggesting that Allah has bestowed on them full ownership and control on the earth and has opened thousands of avenues of comfort for them. It is as if the Master of the Universe has made this whole earth and what it contains a giant warehouse of human needs and comforts, a most comprehensive inventory of that inside it. Now, what is left for human beings to do is to learn to go in there, take out what they need and use it how they will. Science and technology are essentially no more than a trained method of taking out things created by the Master of the Universe and stored in this warehouse, properly and nicely, and use it soundly and beneficially. One who is short on sense and manners and does not know how to take things out from this warehouse, or does not understand how to use what he has taken out, he remains deprived of their benefits. An intelligent person benefits from both.

In short, Allah Ta'ālā has placed all that human beings need on and in this earth which demands that they should be grateful to Him all the time under all conditions. But, human beings are prone to heedlessness. They would not take much time to forget the favours of their Creator and Master - only to return to the same world of things. So, at the end of the verse, it is in a mode of complaint that it was said: قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ (Little you are receptive to advice).

Verses 11- 18

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ صَوَّرْنٰكُمْ ثُمَّ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلٰٓئِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِاٰدَمَ

فَسَجَدُوْٓا اِلَّآ اِبْلِيْسَ ؕ لَمْ يَكُنْ مِّنَ السّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾ قَالَ
مَا مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ اِذْ اَمَرْتُكَ ؕ قَالَ اَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ ۚ خَلَقْتَنِيْ مِنْ
نَّارٍ وَّخَلَقْتَهٗ مِنْ طِيْنٍ ﴿١٢﴾ قَالَ فَاهْبِطْ مِنْهَا فَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَكَ
اَنْ تَتَكَبَّرَ فِيْهَا فَاخْرُجْ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ قَالَ اَنْظِرْنِيْٓ
اِلٰى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ قَالَ اِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِيْنَ ﴿١٥﴾ قَالَ فَبِمَآ
اَغْوَيْتَنِيْ لَاَقْعُدَنَّ لَهُمْ صِرَاطَكَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ﴿١٦﴾ ثُمَّ لَاٰتِيَنَّهُمْ
مِّنْۢ بَيْنِ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ وَعَنْ اَيْمَانِهِمْ وَعَنْ شَمَآئِلِهِمْ ؕ
وَلَا تَجِدُ اَكْثَرَهُمْ شٰكِرِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُوْمًا
مَّدْحُوْرًا ؕ لَمَنْ تَبِعَكَ مِنْهُمْ لَاَمْلَئَنَّ جَهَنَّمَ مِنْكُمْ اَجْمَعِيْنَ ﴿١٨﴾

And We created you, then fashioned you, then We said to the angels, "Prostrate before 'Ādam." So, they all prostrated, except Iblīs. He did not join the prostrate. [11] **Allah said, "What stopped you from prostrating when I ordered you?" He said, "I am better than him. You have created me of fire, and created him of clay."** [12] **He said, "Then, go down from here, it is not for you to be arrogant here. So, go. You are of the low."** [13]

He said, "Then give me respite until a day when all will be resurrected." [14] **He (Allah) said, "Respite is given to you."** [15] **He said, "Then as You have made me go astray, I swear that I will sit for them (in ambush) on Your straight path.** [16] **Then I will come upon them from in front of them and from behind them and from their right and from their left. And you will not find most of them grateful.** [17]

He (Allah) said, "Get out of here, condemned, rejected. Indeed, those of them who follow you, I will fill Hell with you all together. [18]

Commentary

The event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and the Shayṭān has appeared earlier in Section four of Sūrah Al-Baqarah (Ma'āriful-Qur'ān, English Translation, volume I, page 170, under verse 34). Some

aspects of the subject have been covered in comments given there. Answers to some others are being given here.

How Long was the Respite given to Iblīs?

It was exactly at the time Iblīs was under the wrath of Allah, he made a prayer, a strange prayer indeed. He asked for a lease of life until the day of Resurrection. The words in which Allah Ta'ālā answered the prayer, as they appear in this verse, are no more than: إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ (Respite is given to you). From these words, given the nature of the question and the answer, it can be understood that this respite was given until the Resurrection as asked by him. But, what is not stated in this verse clearly is whether the giving of respite mentioned here is until the Resurrection as asked by Iblīs, or is for some other duration. But, in another verse, the words: إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْوَقْتِ الْمَعْلُومِ (Till the day of the appointed time - 15:38) appear at this place which, on the surface, seem to suggest that the respite till the day of *Qiyāmah* as asked by Iblis was not given. Instead, given to him was a respite till a particular time which is preserved in Divine knowledge. The outcome is that the prayer of Iblis was answered - though not completely. He was given respite till a particular time and not till the day of Resurrection or *Qiyāmah*.

Reported in Tafsīr Ibn Jarīr is a narration from Suddiy which supports this view. The exact words of the report are:

فلم ينظره الى يوم البعث و لكن انظره الى يوم الوقت المعلوم وهو يوم ينفخ فى الصور النفخة الاولى فصعق من فى السموت ومن فى الارض فمات،

> Allah Ta'ālā did not give respite to Iblis till the day of Resurrection, instead, He has given him respite till a day the time of which is appointed and that is the day when the Horn will be blown the first time and whoever there is in the heavens or the earth shall be stunned, and dead.

In summation, we can say that the Shaytān had actually asked for a respite in his prayer till the time when the second Horn will be blown and all the dead will be resurrected. This is what is called: يوم البعث (Yowm al-Ba'th). If this prayer was answered as asked, it would have meant that Iblīs was to be alive as based on his prayer while the facts on the ground would have been different: That would be a time

when nothing will be alive except the One Being of the Eternally-Alive and the Self-Sustaining *Ḥayy* and *Qaiyyūm* and that would be the time when the great promise of: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ وَّيَبْقٰى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ (All that is on it will perish and to remain there shall be the Face of your Lord, full of majesty, bounty and honour - 55:26-27) will stand immensely manifested. On that basis, Iblīs was not to live to see that time. Therefore, his one prayer for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th was not granted, instead of which, the time of the respite was changed to *Yowma yunfakhu fi as-ṣur*, till the day blown is the Horn, and granted at that. The effect would be that death shall be the order of the day for the whole creation. Iblīs will have his death as well. When all others are resurrected, he too shall stand resurrected.

These details remove the possible doubt that could arise from the verse: كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ (All that is on it will perish -55:26) referred immediately above specially in relation with this prayer. The apparent contradiction between the two thus stands resolved.

The substance of this investigation is that Yowm al-Ba'th and Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum are two separate days. Iblīs had asked for respite till the Yowm al-Ba'th. This was not granted wholly. Instead of that, a change was made and respite was given till the Yowm al-Waqt al-Ma'lum. Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānavī, in Bayan al-Qur'ān, has preferred the view that these two are really two separate days. In fact, from the time of the blowing of the first Horn upto the entry into Paradise or Hell, it will be a long day with different things happening at different times in it. Based on these different happenings, that day could be attributed to every event which takes place therein. For instance, it could be called the day of the blowing of the Horn (صُوْر) and the day of perishing (فَنا), as well as, the day of Resurrection (بَعْث) and the day of Recompense (جَزا). This helps resolves all doubts and difficulties, فَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ .

Can the Prayer of a Disbeliever be Acceptable?

The question comes from the verse: وَمَا دُعَاءُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ (And the prayer of disbelievers is but in vain - 13:14), it is usually taken that the prayer made by a disbeliever is not answered. But, from this event concerning Iblīs and the statement in the verse, this difficulty becomes obvious. The answer is that, in this mortal world, even the prayer of a

disbeliever can be answered - so much so, that even the prayer of the foremost disbeliever, Iblīs, was answered. But, in the Hereafter, the prayer of a disbeliever will not be answered. The verse quoted above relates to the Hereafter ('Ākhirah). It has nothing to do with this mortal world.

The Event of 'Ādam and Iblīs : The Rationale of Different Words

This story appears in the Holy Qur'ān at several places. The words used in relevant questions and answers differ everywhere, though the event is the same. The reason is that the subject remains the same when the main event is described. That the words remain exactly the same everywhere is not necessary. A narration could be based on meaning too. If the unity of subject and sense exists, variations in words do not deserve consideration.

What made Iblīs speak the way he did before Allah?

The place where Iblīs dared to speak was in the Most August conceivable Presence of the Master of all Honour where the awe and majesty of the occasion would not allow even angels and prophets and messengers to breathe. How did he do that? 'Ulamā say that this was a sombre and highly cutting manifestation of the Divine wrath that, because of the rejection of Iblīs, his view was so obstructed (*ḥijāb*) that he became blind to the grandeur and awe of Allah Ta'ālā and irreverence came down to settle on him all over. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

The Assault of Shayṭān is Multi-Dimensional, not simply Four-Sided

In the present verse (17), Iblīs is said to have identified four sides from which he planned to mislead the children of 'Ādam, that is, the front, the rear and the right and the left. But, the purpose here is not to set up any limits. Instead, the sense is that this will be from all sides and directions. Therefore, the probability of his leading people astray from above and beneath the feet does not contradict it. Similarly, the saying of the Ḥadīth that - Shayṭān can enter the human body and move through the arteries and veins of blood and take command of the whole body - is also not contradictory to this.

In the cited verses (13 & 18), the Shayṭān has been commanded to leave the heavens twice. First, when it was said: فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الصّٰغِرِيْنَ (So, go.You are of the low.) and then, when it was said: قَالَ اخْرُجْ مِنْهَا مَذْءُوْمًا (Get

out of here,.condemned ...). Here, the first saying is perhaps a proposal while the other is its implementation. (Abridged from Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Verses 19 - 25

وَيٰۤاٰدَمُ اسْكُنْ اَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ فَكُلَا مِنْ حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا
تَقْرَبَا هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُوْنَا مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَوَسْوَسَ
لَهُمَا الشَّيْطٰنُ لِيُبْدِيَ لَهُمَا مَاوٗرِيَ عَنْهُمَا مِنْ سَوْاٰتِهِمَا
وَقَالَ مَا نَهٰكُمَا رَبُّكُمَا عَنْ هٰذِهِ الشَّجَرَةِ اِلَّاۤ اَنْ تَكُوْنَا
مَلَكَيْنِ اَوْ تَكُوْنَا مِنَ الْخٰلِدِيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾ وَ قَاسَمَهُمَاۤ اِنِّيْ لَكُمَا
لَمِنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ ﴿٢١﴾ فَدَلّٰىهُمَا بِغُرُوْرٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا ذَاقَا الشَّجَرَةَ
بَدَتْ لَهُمَا سَوْاٰتُهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفٰنِ عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وَّرَقِ
الْجَنَّةِ ؕ وَنَادٰىهُمَا رَبُّهُمَاۤ اَلَمْ اَنْهَكُمَا عَنْ تِلْكُمَا الشَّجَرَةِ وَاَقُلْ
لَّكُمَاۤ اِنَّ الشَّيْطٰنَ لَكُمَا عَدُوٌّ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٢﴾ قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَاۤ
اَنْفُسَنَا ٚ وَاِنْ لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ
﴿٢٣﴾ قَالَ اهْبِطُوْا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ وَلَكُمْ فِي الْاَرْضِ
مُسْتَقَرٌّ وَّ مَتَاعٌ اِلٰى حِيْنٍ ﴿٢٤﴾ قَالَ فِيْهَا تَحْيَوْنَ وَ فِيْهَا
تَمُوْتُوْنَ وَمِنْهَا تُخْرَجُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾

And O 'Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise, and eat from wherever you like, but do not go near this tree, otherwise you shall join the transgressors." [19]

Then Satan whispered to them, so that he may uncover to them what was covered of their shame; and said, "Your Lord has not prohibited this tree for you, but to avoid your becoming angels or your becoming eternal." [20] **And he swore on oaths, "I am one of your well-wishers."** [21] **So he cast them down by deception. So, when they tasted (the fruit of) the tree, their shame became apparent to them, and they began to patch together upon themselves some leaves of Paradise, and**

their Lord called them, "Did I not forbid you from that tree, and did I not tell you that the Satan is an open enemy for you?" [22]

They said, "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and do not bless us with mercy, we shall, indeed, be among the losers." [23]

He said, "Go down, some of you enemies of some; and for you on the earth there will be a dwelling place and enjoyment for a time." [24] **(Further) He said, "There you shall live and there you shall die and from there you shall be taken out."** [25]

Commentary

The story of Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام and Iblīs mentioned in the present verses has appeared in the fourth section of Sūrah Al-Baqarah. Detailed comments have been given in the Tafsīr of that Sūrah. If needed, please see Ma'āriful-Qurān, English Translation, Volume I, Pages 170-187.

Verses 26 - 27

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُوَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ وَرِيشًا ۖ
وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ۚ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ
﴿٢٦﴾ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ لَا يَفْتِنَنَّكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ كَمَا أَخْرَجَ أَبَوَيْكُم مِّنَ
الْجَنَّةِ يَنزِعُ عَنْهُمَا لِبَاسَهُمَا لِيُرِيَهُمَا سَوْآتِهِمَا ۗ إِنَّهُ يَرَاكُمْ
هُوَ وَقَبِيلُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ
لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

O children of 'Ādam, We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwa! that is the best. That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice. [26]

O children of 'Ādam, "Do not let Satan put you in trouble the way he had your parents expelled from Paradise, having their dress removed from them, so that he could show them their shame. Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them.

Surely, We have made the satans friends for those who do not believe. [27]

Commentary

Mentioned in almost a section preceding the verses cited above was the event relating to Sayyidnā 'Ādam and Satan, the accursed. The first outcome of the satanic instigation was that the heavenly apparel of 'Ādam and Ḥawwā عليهم السلام came off leaving them coverless as a result of which they began hiding their coverable body with leaves.

In the first of the present verses (26), Allah Ta'ālā has addressed all children of 'Ādam and told them that the dress they wear is a great blessing the worth and value of which must be recognized by them. The address here is not to Muslims alone. It is to all children of Adam. This is a sharp pointer to the fact that the act of covering the coverable parts of the body and the wearing of dress is both a human need and a natural desire. Everyone abides by it without any distinction of religion or community. Then, giving its details, three kinds of clothings were mentioned.

First of all, it was said: لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِىْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ (clothing that covers your shame). Here, the word: يُّوَارِىْ (*yuwārī*) is a derivation from: مُوَارَات (*muwārat*) which means to cover, hide or conceal. And the word: سَوْاٰة (sau'āt) is the plural form of: سَوْءَة (*sau'ah*). This is applied to body parts the uncovering of which is taken, by nature, as bad and shameful by all human beings. The sense of the statement is that Allah has sent down for people dress with which they could cover their body parts the exposing of which is a matter of shame.

After that, it was said: وَرِيْشًا (*wa rīshā*). The dress one uses for adornment and decency is called: رِيْش (*Rīsh*). The meaning is that just to cover up the cover-worthy body parts, even a simple set of clothing is enough. But, Allah has provided for you much more than simply clothing, He blessed you with dresses which make you look handsome, or decent, neat and civilized.

At this place, the word used by the Holy Qur'ān is: اَنْزَلْنَا (*anzalnā*: We have sent down). It means to bestow or bless with. It is not necessary that it be sent down from the heavens ready to wear. This is like another expression: اَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ (57:25). It means: 'We sent down the iron,'

which is dug out of the earth as everyone can see. However, at both these places, by saying: أَنزَلْنَا (*anzalnā* : We have sent down), it was indicated that the way no human planning or artifice operates as active agent in what 'descends from the heavens,' so it is with the essential mother element of dress, cotton or wool etc., where human ingenuity has no role to play. That is simply a gift from the great creative power of Allah Ta'ālā. But, human artifice does work in efforts to make out of these materials dresses to individual taste, temperament, and the need to stay safe against heat or chill. Even the way to that artifice is shown by Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, eyes that see reality see all this as nothing but Divine gift sent from the heavens.

Two Uses of Dress

Identified here are two uses of dress: (1) To cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr*), and (2) protection from hot and cold weather, and decor of the body. The first use has been placed first which indicates that the real purpose of human dress is to be able to cover the cover-worthy parts of the body (*satr al-'awrah*). This also happens to be its line of demarcation from animals. The dress given to animals has been naturally made a part of their body. The purpose it serves is either to protect from hot and cold weather, or beautify them. No elaborate arrangements have been made to cover up their *satr*. Nevertheless, formations of particular body parts in their bodies have been so placed that they do not remain totally exposed. Some would have a screen of a tail and many others would have other obstructers of view.

After having related the event concerning 'Ādam and Ḥawwā' ('Ādam and Eve) and how the Satan had instigated them, this mention of dress indicates that for human beings to be naked, or the exposure of their shame before others is a sign of abject disgrace and indecency at its worst. Moreover, it is an antecedent to all sorts of evils and disorders.

The Modern Obsession for Nudity: The Tempter of 'Ādam and Eve still Stalks

So, the first attack of Satan came from this opening against human beings when their dress dropped off from where it belonged. Even today, when Satan wishes to confuse and waylay human beings through his accomplices, it always picks up a chic front like being trendy, hip,

hot or cool and ends up pulling people out from homes into streets and alleys naked or just about. It would seem that what Satan has classified as modern advancement does not happen unless women are deprived of their sense of shame and modesty and made to parade around in the near-nude.

After 'Īmān, the First Duty is to Cover your Body Properly

When Shayṭān, sensing this weakness in human beings, made the first assault on their body cover, the Shari'ah of Islam acted smartly as it is responsible for the inculcation, protection and flowering of every good in its people that it took the issue so seriously that it enjoined the covering of human body as the first duty after *'Īmān* or faith. The Ṣalāh, the Ṣawm, and duties like those come after that.

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه says that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: When someone wears a new dress, he should recite the following Du'ā while wearing it:

اَلْحَمْدُلِلّٰهِ الَّذِىْ كَسَانِىْ مَا اُوَارِىْ بِهٖ عَوْرَتِىْ وَاَتَجَمَّلُ بِهٖ فِىْ حَيَاتِىْ

> Praise be to Allah who gave me clothes with which I am to cover the cover-worthy parts of my body and look handsome with it in my life.

The Great Reward of Giving the Old Dress as Ṣadaqah after Wearing the New One

He also said: If a person who wears a new dress and gives away the old one as Ṣadaqah (charity) to anyone poor and needy, he comes under the protection and patronage of Allah Ta'ālā in all states of his life and death. (Ibn Kathīr from the Musnad of Aḥmad)

In this Ḥadīth too, one is reminded of the two considerations in wearing a dress which is why Allah Ta'ālā has created the human dress.

Covering of Body is Natural and the Theory of Evolution is False

The event of Sayyidnā 'Ādam and the statement of the Qur'ān make it clear that covering the body and using a dress is a natural desire and an inborn necessity of human beings which has been with them since the very beginning. Those who profess that the first man

went around naked and it was only after having passed through stages of evolution that he invented the dress, they are patently false.

The Ultimate Dress

After having identified the dress of two kinds, that which covers the body properly and that which gives comfort and beauty, a third kind of dress was mentioned by saying: وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ (And the dress of Taqwā [fear of Allah]! that is the best). In some readings (*Qira'āt*) of the Qur'ān, the word: لباس (*libās*: dress) has been rendered with a *fatḥah* on the letter: سِيْن (*sīn*) as: لِبَاسَ التَّقْوٰى Thus, read with: اَنْزَلْنَا (*anzalnā*), it will mean: We have sent down a third dress of Taqwā. But, in accordance with the well-known reading of it, it means that everyone knows the two dresses mentioned, however, there is a third kind of dress, that of Taqwā - and that is the best of all dresses. The dress of Taqwā, as explained by Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās and 'Urwah ibn Zubayr رضی الله عنهم اجمعين, means right conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

The sense is that the way the visible physical dress of human beings serves the purpose of covering the cover-worthy parts of the body, protecting from hot and cold weather and giving beauty and embellishment - very similarly, there is a spiritual dress, that of right and becoming conduct, good deed and fear of Allah. This *libās* or dress of Taqwā conceals human weaknesses and moral shortcomings. It delivers one from immediate hardships and ultimate losses. Therefore, it is the best of dresses one can wear.

Present here is the hint that an evil-doing person who has no fear of Allah and does not care for acting right, must be disgraced ultimately, no matter how he covers up - as reported by Ibn Jarīr from Sayyidnā 'Uthmān al-Ghanī رضی الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: By Allah in whose hands rests the life of Muḥammad صلى الله عليه وسلم, whatever a person does in secret, Allah Ta'ālā wraps his deed like a sheet around him and announces it - the good of it, if the deed is good, and the evil of it, if the deed is evil. Wraping like a sheet on the body means that it is visible to everyone. No matter how secretly one may do something, Allah Ta'ālā makes its effects become evident on the face and the body. Then, to authenticate his statement, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم recited this verse: وَرِيْشًا، وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوٰى، ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ (... and dress that adorns. And the dress of Taqwā, that is the best.

That is one of the signs of Allah).

The Real Purpose of Physical Dress Too is to Achieve Taqwā

The expression, 'Dress of Taqwā,' indicates that the purpose of physical dress which fulfills the function of covering the body properly, and helps beautify it as well, is really a way of achieving the ability to fear Allah, or Taqwā as in the Qur'ān. This ability should manifest itself in the way one dresses. The parts of the body which must be covered should be fully covered. It should be ensured that one's modesty stays concealed. Neither should it be allowed to remain naked, nor should the dress on the body be so tight-fitting through which body parts look like being naked. Then, this dress should not have the flair of pride and arrogance, instead, it should reflect modesty and humility. Then, it should not be extravagant either. The cloth material used should be tailored to need. And neither should the dress for women be masculine, nor the dress for men be feminine, which is odious and repugnant in the sight of Allah. Also, there should be no imitation in wearing a dress like others which is a sign of deviation from the established norms of one's community.

Along with it, there is the crucial need to correct one's morals and deeds which is the real purpose of dress. At the end of the verse comes the invitation to understand: ذٰلِكَ مِنْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُوْنَ (That is one of the signs of Allah, so that they may be receptive to advice).

In the second verse (27), the address reverts to all children of Adam and the admonition given is that they should keep guarding against the deception of Shayṭān in everything they do under whatever circumstance they are - lest, Shayṭān puts them on another trial as he did with their parents, 'Ādam and Eve. He made them leave Paradise, caused them to shed their dress and render their essential cover to be uncovered. He was their eternal enemy. His enmity was something, they were never to lose sight of.

At the end of the verse, it was said:

اِنَّهٗ يَرٰىكُمْ هُوَ وَقَبِيْلُهٗ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا تَرَوْنَهُمْ اِنَّا جَعَلْنَا الشَّيٰطِيْنَ اَوْلِيَآءَ لِلَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ

Indeed, he sees you - he and his company - from where you do not see them. Surely, We have made the satans friends for

those who do not believe - (27).

Here, the word: قَبِيل (*qabil*) means company or group. A joined family group is called: Qabilah or tribe. Common groups are known as *qabil*. The sense of the verse is: For you the Satan is a kind of enemy that he and his accomplices do see you but you do not see them. Therefore, the chances that you would fall a victim to their deception are fairly strong.

But, in other verses, it has also been clarified that people who keep turning to Allah Ta'ala and maintain their guard against the deception of Shaytan, for them, the wily web of Shaytan is much too weak.

Then, what has been said at the end of this verse - that 'We have made the satans friends and guardians of those who do not believe' - also indicates that those who believe should not find staying away from their web of deception at all difficult.

Some righteous elders have said that the defence against the enemy who sees us but we cannot see him is simple. Let us come under the protection of Allah Ta'ala. He sees these satans, watches how they move and act - but they cannot see Him.

And the statement, that human beings cannot see Shaytan, is in terms of general conditions and habit. If a human being were to see them contra-habitually, that would not be considered contrary to it - as is the case of Jinns coming to the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم who asked questions and embraced Islam, which appears in authentic narrations of Hadith. (Ruh al-Ma'ani)

Verses 28 - 31

وَإِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا عَلَيْهَآ ءَابَآءَنَا وَاللّٰهُ أَمَرَنَا
بِهَا ط قُلْ إِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَآءِ ط أَتَقُولُونَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا
لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾ قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّي بِالْقِسْطِ قف وَأَقِيمُوا وُجُوهَكُمْ
عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَّادْعُوهُ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ ط كَمَا بَدَأَكُمْ
تَعُودُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾ فَرِيقًا هَدٰى وَ فَرِيقًا حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الضَّلٰلَةُ ط إِنَّهُمُ
اتَّخَذُوا الشَّيٰطِينَ أَوْلِيَآءَ مِنْ دُونِ اللّٰهِ وَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ

مُّهْتَدُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ
وَّكُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا ۚ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾

And when they do something shameful, they say, "We have found our fathers doing it, and Allah has bidden us to do so." Say, "Allah never bids anything shameful. Do you say about Allah what you do not know?" [28]

Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice." And yourselves be aright at each occasion of prostration, and pray to Him with pure faith in Him. As He originated you, so you will return. [29] **Some He led to guidance, and others had misguidance as their destiny. Indeed, they have taken the satans as their friends, instead of Allah, and they think that they are on the right path.** [30]

O children of 'Adam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant. [31]

Commentary

Before Islam, one of the many shameful and absurd customs Shayṭān had made the people of 'Arab Jāhiliyyah follow was that no one, other than the Quraysh, could make the Ṭawāf of Ka'bah in one's own clothes. Instead of that, the requirement was to borrow a dress from a Qurayshi, otherwise, make the Ṭawāf naked.

As obvious, the Quraysh could not provide clothes to the whole people of Arabia, therefore, the consequence was that these people would make Ṭawāf mostly naked, men and women, both, with women usually doing their Ṭawāf in the darkness of the night. Then, they would explain the satanic expediency of this act by saying: 'The clothes wearing which we have committed sins are clothes in which making the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah is contrary to etiquette (so devoid of commonsense they were that it did not occur to them that making their Ṭawāf naked was far more contrary to etiquette, and still more so, contrary to human dignity itself) and the only exception to this rule was the tribe of Quraysh which, because they were the servants of the sacred Ḥaram, was not bound to follow this law of nudity.'

The first verse among those cited above has been revealed to identify and eliminate this absurd custom. It was said in the verse that on occasions when they did something shameful and people told them not to do so, their answer to them would be that their forefathers and elders have been doing so all along, and now for them, to forsake their practice was a matter of shame. Then, they also said that this was what Allah had told them to do. (Ibn Kathīr)

In this verse, '*al-faḥshā'*,' according to most commentators means this very naked Ṭawāf. In fact, *fuḥsh*, *faḥshā'* and *fāḥishah* refer to every evil act the evil of which reaches the farthest limits and is all too loud and clear in terms of commonsense and sound taste (Maẓharī). Then, that its good and bad becomes quite rational too, is something which stands established universally. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Then, come the two arguments they advanced in support of the continuance of this absurd custom. One of these was the need to follow ancestral customs, that is, maintaining these was good in itself. The answer to this proposition was fairly clear as the blind following of ancestral customs was not something reasonable. Even a person of average commonsense can understand that a method cannot be justified on the basis that one's forefathers used to do so. If the methods used by forefathers were to be taken to be sufficient to justify the legitimacy of an action, then, the fact is that forefathers of different peoples of the world used to act differently, even contradictorily. This argument will, then, render all erroneous methods of the whole world to be correct and permissible. In short, this argument advanced by these ignorant people did not deserve attention. Therefore, the Qur'ān has not considered it necessary to answer this question here. Though, in some Ḥadīth narrations, it has been answered by saying that an act of ignorance which may have been committed by one's forefathers could hardly be worth following by any stretch of imagination.

The second argument in favour of their naked Ṭawāf advanced by these people was that Allah had ordered them to do so. This was a flagrant lie. They were attributing to Allah what He had never commanded. Addressing the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, the answer given was: قُلْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ (Allah never bids anything shameful) - because commanding people to do something like that is against His wisdom

and counter to His state of being the Purest of the pure. Then, taken to task was their false and untrue attribution to Allah. They were warned with the words: أَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ (Do you say about Allah what you do not know?). It means that they were attributing a falsity to Allah without having an evidence in support; and it is obvious that attributing something to someone without proper investigation and authority is an act of rank effrontery and patent injustice. Then if done in the case of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*, reporting anything so will be a crime and injustice the magnitude of which cannot be imagined. At this point, let it be understood clearly that the respected Mujtahid Imāms, when they deduce, formulate and describe injunctions which appear in the verses of the Qur'ān through *Ijtihād*, that effort does not fall under the purview of this verse. The reason is that their deduction is a process which operates under the justification of the very words and meanings of the Qur'ān.

Said in the second verse was: قُلْ أَمَرَ رَبِّيْ بِالْقِسْطِ (Say, "My Lord has bidden me to do justice). Here, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has been asked to tell those ignorant people, who were falsely attributing the justification of their naked Ṭawāf towards Allah, that Allah always commands justice. The word used here is: اَلْقِسْطُ (*al-qisṭ*) which essentially means justice, balance and moderation. At this place, 'al-qist' refers to a conduct which is free of excess or deficiency, that is, which neither falls short, nor exceeds the appointed limits - as is the case with all injunctions of the Shari'ah. Therefore, under this sense of 'al-qist' included there are all acts of worship and obedience as well as all general injunctions of the Sharī'ah. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

After having stated the command of justice and moderation, two injunctions of the Sharī'ah relevant to their erroneous conduct have been particularly mentioned. These are: أَقِيْمُوْا وُجُوْهَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ (and yourself be aright at each occasion of prostration) and: وَادْعُوْهُ مُخْلِصِيْنَ لَهُ الدِّيْنَ (and pray to Him with pure faith in Him). The first command relates to what one does physically and outwardly. The other belongs to the heart, the spiritual dimension. In the first injunction, the word: مَسْجِدٍ (*masjid*), according to most commentators, appears in the sense of prostration (*sajdah, sujūd* or *'Ibādah*) and it means that one should be aright at the time of every Ṣalāh or any other act of worship. It could also mean that one should make an effort and be particular to keep

one's orientation straight towards the Qiblah. And being aright or keeping the orientation straight could also mean that one should subordinate everything one says or does to what Allah has commanded, maintaining an orientation and stance that never varies, never dwindles and moves elsewhere. Given this meaning, this injunction will not remain particular for Ṣalāh only - instead, it would comprehend all acts of worship, dealings and transactions.

The second injunction means that one should worship Allah, purely and exclusively, without associating in that act anyone else in any capacity, even to the limit that such worship should also be free from, and untainted with, what is known as al-Shirk al-Khafiyy (concealed Shirk of associating others with the Divinity of Allah), that is, hypocricy and *riyā'* (show off).

By mentioning both injunctions together, the indication being given could be that one must correct, align and synchronize both dimensions of one's person, the outward and the inward, the physical and the spiritual, with the injunctions of the Shari'ah. Not enough is obvious obedience (*Iṭa'ah*) without sincerity (*Ikhlāṣ*), nor can simple sincerity of the heart become sufficient without following the Sharī'ah as visible outwardly too. Instead of that, it is binding on everyone that one should correct and align one's outward bearings in accordance with the Sharī'ah and never forget to keep his or her inward state of being too reserved for Allah Ta'ālā alone. This helps us see the error (dichotomy) of those who take Sharī'ah (the outward or physical adherence to faith) and Ṭarīqah (the inward or spiritual adherence to faith) as two different ways to approach religion. Some of them would even presume that it was sufficient to correct one's inward dimension as shown by Ṭarīqah - even if they go about doing what is contrary to the Sharī'ah! This is a gaping error.

At the end of the verse (29), it was said: كَمَا بَدَاَكُمْ تَعُوْدُوْنَ (As He originated you, so you will return). It means that it was He who created you first and it will be He who will make you rise again on the day of *Qiyāmah*. For His perfect power, this was not difficult at all. Perhaps to indicate this element of convenience what was said here is: تَعُوْدُوْنَ (*ta'ūdūn*: you will return) and not: يُعِيْدُكُمْ (We shall make you rise) since making to rise again requires not much action. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

There is an additional benefit of introducing this sentence here. It helps one in abiding by the injunctions of the Sharī'ah - because it is the realization that there is a life-to-come, and a Last Day, the Day of *Qiyāmah*, and reward or punishment for deeds, good or bad, which makes what is difficult easy, and what is painful bearable. Experience bears out that man is a tough customer. Unless one is under such gripping apprehension, no word of advice can make him do what is right, nor can the restriction of any law stop him from going into crimes.

In the third verse (30), it was said that there are people Allah has guided right while there are others who have provided the proof of their erroneous conduct, because they have, bypassing Allah, made satans their comrades, and they presume that they are on the right path.

The sense is that the guidance of Allah *Subḥānahū wa Ta'ālā* was open to all, but they turned away from it and started following satans, then, on top of it, they were led to think that their sickness was health, and their error, guidance.

This verse tells us that not knowing the injunctions of the Sharī'ah is no valid excuse. If someone takes to a way of error thinking it to be correct with full sincerity, he willl not be considered excusable in the sight of Allah. - because Allah has given everyone reason and commonsense to use it and distinguish the true from the false. Then, man was not left to rely on his reason alone. He sent prophets and books. They made the right and wrong and the true and false all too clear.

Now someone may doubt that a person who is acting in good faith, though in error, should not have any blame coming to him. He should be excused because he is not aware of his error. The answer is that Allah Ta'ālā has blessed human beings with reason and sense with the added benefit of the teachings of the noble prophets, may peace be upon them all. At least, through these, he should be able to compare his method and way with that suggested by them. There has to be some doubt or pinch or question in his mind. Now, his fault is that he did not pay any attention to what they taught and kept sticking to the way of error he had taken to.

However, a person who has striven his best in the quest of truth,

yet failed to find the right path and true teaching, may be found excusable in the sight of Allah - as Imām al-Ghazali has said in his book, Al-Tafriqah Bayn al-Islam wa Al-zandaqah. والله أعلم .

In the fourth verse (31), it was said: 'O children of 'Ādam, take along what looks good on you to every mosque. And eat and drink and do not be extravagant. Surely, He does not like the extravagant'. In the way the 'Arabs of Jāhiliyyah used to take the making of the Ṭawāf of the Ka'bah naked as the correct method of worship and an act of reverence for the House of Allah, they also had a custom that they would skip eating and drinking during the days of Ḥajj. They would eat no more than what would keep them alive. They particularly abstained from butter oil, milk and other pure eatables. (Ibn Jarīr)

The present verse was revealed against this absurd practice. It enjoined that they should abstain from it because making Ṭawāf naked was an act of immodesty and bad manners. Similarly, doing the reverse of it, that is, abstaining from good food given by Allah Ta'ālā without any valid excuse had hardly anything to do with religion. In fact, forbidding on themselves what Allah had made lawful for them was effrontery and excess in an act of worship, something disliked by Allah. Therefore, eat and drink as you wish during the days of Ḥajj, but do not be extravagant. Totally abstaining from Ḥalāl foods is also included under extravagance. Then, becoming heedless to the real objectives of Ḥajj and the Dhikr of Allah and remaining busy with nothing but eating and drinking is also included under extravagance.

Though this verse has been revealed to eradicate a particular custom of nudity in the 'Arab Jāhiliyyah which they demonstrated at the time of Ṭawāf in the name of reverence for the Ka'bah, but the Imāms of Tafsīr and the Jurists of Muslim Ummah unanimously agree that the revelation of an injunction in relation to a particular event does not mean that that injunction is restricted to the same event. Instead, what is considered here is the generality of words. The injunction, then, applies on everything that falls under the generality of these words.

Covering the Body Properly is Obligatory : There is No Ṣalāh Without it

Therefore, the majority of Ṣaḥābah and Tābi'īn, and the Mujtahid

Imāms, have deduced many injunctions from this verse. The most important of them is about Ṣalāh. As making Ṭawāf naked has been prohibited in this verse, the ruling applies identically to Ṣalāh as well which becomes Ḥarām (forbidden) and false and futile - because the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said in a Ḥadīth: اَلطَّوَافُ بِالْبَيْتِ صَلٰوةٌ (The Ṭawāf of the House [of Allah] is Ṣalāh). In addition to that, since the majority of commentators agree that the word, 'masjid' in this verse itself means Sajdah (sujūd, prostration), the prohibition of nudity in the state of Sajdah becomes explicitly inclusive in this verse. Now, if this is prohibited in Sajdah, then, it will obviously stand prohibited in all other movements of Ṣalāh such as Rukū', Qiyām and Qu'ūd. Then, the statement of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم itself has made it more evident.

It also appears in Ḥadīth that the Ṣalāh of any adult woman is not permissible without proper head and body cover (khimār, ridā, chādar, dupatta or large scarf) (Tirmidhī).

That covering the body properly is obligatory in conditions other than Ṣalāh as well stands proved from other verses of the Qur'ān and the narrations of Ḥadīth - one such verse has already appeared a little earlier: يٰبَنِىٓ اٰدَمَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُّوَارِىْ سَوْاٰتِكُمْ 'We have sent down to you clothing that covers your shame - 26.'

To sum up, it can be said that covering the body properly is the first human and Islamic obligation on everyone which is mandatory under all conditions - and, in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, it is obligatory in the first degree.

A Good Dress For Ṣalāh

The verse brings out another rule of conduct. By calling dress: 'Zīnah,' (adornment), the hint given is that the preferred practice in Ṣalāh is that one should not limit himself to only covering his body functionally, but choose to wear what adorns, looks becoming - of course, within one's means. It was the habit of Sayyidnā Ḥasan رضى الله عنه that he would wear his best dress at the time of Ṣalāh saying: Allah Ta'ālā loves beauty, therefore, I dress myself beautifully to please my Lord for He has said: خُذُوْا زِيْنَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ (take along what looks good on you to every mosque).

So, we can see that this verse proves two things, that covering the body properly is obligatory in Ṣalāh, and that it is recommended and merit-worthy to wear a neat, clean and good dress, within means.

Ṣalāh and Dress : Some Rulings

The third problem at this place is about *Satr*, that is, the parts of the body to be concealed, concealing which is, under all conditions, and specially in Ṣalāh and Ṭawāf, an obligation (Farḍ) - so, what are its limits? The Qur'ān has given a command briefly - its details have been entrusted with the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. He explained it in details. He told us that the Satr of men is from the navel to the knees, and the Satr of women is the whole body except the face and both palms and feet, which are exempt.

All these details appear in Ḥadīth narrations. For men, if the body below the navel, or if the knees are open, then, such a dress is a sin in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to be performed in it as due and proper. Similarly, if the head, neck or arms or shin or calf of a woman are open, then, her being dressed like that is impermissible in itself, and Ṣalāh too does not get to performed as due and proper. Says the Ḥadīth: 'A home in which there is a woman with her head uncovered, angels of good would not come there.'

That the face of a woman, her palms and feet which have been exempted from Satr (the parts of body covering and concealing which is obligatory) means that, should these be open during the Ṣalāh, it will cause no defect in Ṣalāh. It never means that a woman would be moving freely even before non-Maḥram men (marriage with whom is permissible) with her face open without a valid excuse as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam.

As for this injunction, it is related to the obligation of covering the body properly (Satr) which is *sine qua non* for Ṣalāh - that is, it stands as if not performed at all. And since what is required in Ṣalāh is not the functional covering of the body alone, instead, the advice given is to wear a dress which looks good on one (*Zīnah*), therefore, for men to make Ṣalāh bare-headed, or doing it with shoulders or elbows open, is Makrūh (reprehensible or disliked) - whether the shirt itself be half-sleeved, or has been rolled up, the Ṣalāh remains Makruh after all. Similarly, Ṣalāh remains Makruh in a dress one would not prefer to

wear before friends, or in public, as something unbecoming - for example, wearing an undershirt alone - without a shirt, even if it has full sleeves; or, skipping the wearing of a cap and making do with some cloth piece or a tiny handkerchief knotted or tucked round the head. When no regular person would like to appear before friends or others in that head-bare state, how would that become desirable as a mode of appearance before Allah, the Master of all the worlds? That Ṣalāh is Makruh when offered with bare head, shoulders and elbows has been inferred from the word: زِينَة (*zīnah*: what looks good) of this Qur'ānic verse, and also from the clarifications of the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

To recapitulate, it can be said that the injunction in this verse was primarily revealed to eradicate the custom of nudity in pagan Arabia (the age of Jāhiliyyah), but the generality of its words yielded other injunctions and rulings as well. Similar is the case with the second sentence in the verse: كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant). Though, this too was revealed to erase the custom of Arab Jāhiliyyah that they would take eating good food during the days of Ḥajj as sin, but, here too, the generality of words helps prove many injunctions and rulings.

Eating and Drinking as Needed is Obligatory

To begin with, eating and drinking is obligatory on everyone from the point of view of the Shari'ah as well. If anyone abandons eating and drinking despite having the ability to do so, to the limit that he dies, or becomes too weak even to fulfill what is obligatory on him, then, this person shall be sinning and committing a crime in the sight of Allah.

Legality Operates until Proved Otherwise

One ruling deduced from this verse, as specified by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ in his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, is: Basically, all edibles are permissible and Ḥalāl (lawful) unless the unlawfulness or prohibition of something particular stands proved through an evidence of the Sharī'ah. In its absence, everything will be considered permissible and lawful. This was suggested by the fact that the object of: كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا (Eat and drink) was not mentioned in the verse, that is, it did not specify what to eat or drink. The masters of Arabic diction have clearly established that not mentioning the object on such occasions is an indicator towards its

generality, that is, one can eat and drink everything, except things which have been declared to be Ḥarām (unlawful, impermissible, prohibited, forbidden). (Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān by Al-Jaṣṣāṣ)

Extravagance in Eating and Drinking is Not Permissible

The last sentence of the verse: وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (do not be extravagant) proves that eating and drinking is, no doubt, permissible - in fact, it is an order - but, along with it, being extravagant while doing so is prohibited. *'Isrāf'* means to cross the limit. Then, the crossing of limits takes many forms. One of them is to cross the limits of Ḥalāl and land into the area of Ḥarām, that is, one starts eating and drinking things which are prohibited. That this is Ḥarām is all too obvious.

Another aspect is that one starts taking what Allah has made Ḥalāl and abstains from it as being Ḥarām without any valid legal excuse as admitted by the Sharī'ah of Islam. It should be understood that the way it is a crime and sin to use what is Ḥarām, similarly, taking the Ḥalāl as Ḥarām is also a rebellion against Divine Law and a very grave sin. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

On the same analogy, eating and drinking beyond the limits of hunger and need is also what Isrāf or extravagance is. It is for this reason that Muslim Jurists (*fuqahā'*) have written that eating more than needed to remove hunger is not permissible (Aḥkām al-Qur'ān and others). Then, it also falls under the ruling governing Isrāf or extravagance that one eats much less than needed, despite having the ability and choice, which makes him weak and unable to fulfill what is enjoined upon him. It was to forbid both these kinds of extravagance that the Qur'ān has said:

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِيْنَ كَانُوْٓا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيٰطِيْنِ

The extravagant are brothers of the satans - 17:27.

Then, in Sūrah Al-Furqān, it was said:

وَالَّذِيْنَ إِذَآ أَنْفَقُوْا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوْا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوْا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ قَوَامًا

(True servants of Allah are) those who, when they spend, would not over-spend and under-spend and the moderate behavior is between that. - 25:67.

Moderation in Eating and Drinking is Always Beneficial

Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه said: 'Avoid eating and drinking too much because it spoils the body, generates diseases and slackens activity. Instead, take to moderation in eating and drinking for it is good for the health of the body, and is far removed from extravagance (*Isrāf*) in it.' He also said: 'Allah Ta'ālā does not like an obese 'Ālim' (that is, a scholar of religion who has become fat and heavy as a result of eating excessively by choice). Then, he further said: 'A person does not get destroyed until he starts preferring his personal desires over his Faith.' (Rūḥ A-Ma'ānī from Abū Nu'aym)

Righteous elders of the early period have said that to keep busy with the business of eating and drinking all the time, or to prefer it over other matters of importance giving the impression that one has no other worthy purpose left in life but eating and drinking, is included under Israf (extravagance). Also well-known is their saying that one should eat to live, not live to eat.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has included the attitude of compulsively satiating every desire as and when it emerges as included under Isrāf (extravagance). The words of the Ḥadīth are: إِنَّ مِنَ الْإِسْرَافِ أَنْ تَأْكُلَ كُلَّ مَا اشْتَهَيْتَ (It is also an Israf that one eats everything one desires). (Ibn Mājah from Sayyidnā Anas)

As reported by Al-Baihaqī, The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم once saw Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها eating twice on a day and he said: 'Yā 'Ā'ishah, would you like that eating becomes your only pastime?'

And this command for moderation in eating and drinking mentioned in this verse is not restricted to eating and drinking alone. The truth of the matter is that the course of moderation is very desirable in wearing what one wears and living where one lives, in almost everything. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه said: Eat and drink what you wish and wear what you like. But, take care of two things: One, that there be no Isrāf (excess from the measure of need) in it. Two, that there be no pride and arrogance about it.

Eight Rulings from One *Āyah*

In short, eight rulings of the Sharī'ah come out from the statement: كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant): (1) Eating

and drinking is obligatory as needed, (2) unless the unlawfulness of something stands proved as based on an evidence admitted by the Sharī'ah, everything is Ḥalāl, (3) the use of things prohibited by Allah and His Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم is Isrāf and is impermissible, (4) taking as Ḥarām what Allah has made Ḥalāl is also Isrāf, and a grave sin, (5) once one has eaten his fill, eating anymore is impermissible, (6) eating so little that one becomes weak and is rendered unable to fulfill his obligations is also Isrāf, (7) to keep thinking of eating and drinking all the time is also Isrāf and (8) It is not necessary that one must have what one wishes for at a given time.

The rules recounted above which emerge from this verse have their religious benefits. If one looks at it medically, a better prescription for health and well-being will be difficult to find. The key is: Moderation in eating and drinking. That is your sanctuary from all diseases.

According to Tafsīr Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī and Maẓharī, Khalīfah Hārūn Al-Rashīd had a personal physician who was a Christian. He said to 'Ali ibn Ḥusayn ibn al-Wāqidi: 'Your Book (the Qur'ān) has nothing about medicine in it, although there are only two fields of knowledge in our time, the knowledge of religion and the knowledge of bodies called Medicine.' 'Ali ibn Ḥusayn said: Allah Ta'ālā has put the whole science of medicine in half a verse of the Qur'ān. He says: كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوْا (Eat and drink and do not be extravagant) (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr reports this saying also with reference to some other righteous elders of the earlier times). Then, the Court physician asked: All right, is there something in the sayings of your prophet about Medicine?' 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn replied: 'The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has reduced the whole science of medicine in a few sayings of his when he said that 'the stomach is the nursery of diseases' and 'abstinance from harmful things is the root of all medicine' and 'give every body what it can take (as a matter of habit)' (Kashshāf & Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī). After hearing this, the Christian physician said: 'Your Book and your Prophet have left no Medicine for Galen (Jālinūs).'

Based on a narration from Sayyidnā Abi Hurairah رضى الله عنه in Shu'ab al-'Īmān, Al-Baihaqī has reported that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'The stomach is the reservoir of the body. All arteries and nerves of the body get satiated from this reservoir. If the stomach is in

proper order, all veins will return with healthy food from here. And if it is not in proper order, all veins will spread out in the body as carriers of diseases.'

Muhaddithīn (experts in the discipline of Ḥadīth) have expressed doubts about the use of some words in these narrations of Ḥadīth. But, all of them agree to the emphasis laid on eating moderately and observing precaution present in countless Āḥadīth. (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)

Verses 32 - 34

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِيْنَةَ اللّٰهِ الَّتِيْٓ اَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهٖ وَالطَّيِّبٰتِ مِنَ
الرِّزْقِ ۭ قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَّوْمَ
الْقِيٰمَةِ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ
رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْاِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ
بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَاَنْ تُشْرِكُوْا بِاللّٰهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهٖ سُلْطٰنًا وَّاَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا
عَلَى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ ۚ فَاِذَا جَاۗءَ
اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Say, "Who has prohibited the adornment Allah has brought forth for His servants, and the wholesome things of sustenance?"

Say, "They are for the believers during this worldly life (though shared by others), while they are purely for them on the day of Resurrection. This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand." [32]

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know. [33]

And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before. [34]

Commentary

Warned in the first verse are those who practice excess in acts of worship and introduce self-invented restrictions into it. They would abstain from things made Ḥalāl by Allah Ta'ālā and go on to make them Ḥarām on them and call it an act of obedience to and worship of Allah - as was the case of the disbelievers of Makkah who just did not consider wearing clothes in Ṭawāf during the days of Hajj as permissible and who used to think of abstinence from good food made lawful by Allah Ta'ālā to be an act of worship.

Such people have been sternly reprimanded in a chastising mode by inquiring as to who has made good and becoming dress created by Allah for his servants and the good and pure foods bestowed by Him Ḥarām for people?

Abstinence from Good Dress and Tasty Food is No Teaching of Islam

It means that to determine and declare something to be Ḥalāl or Ḥarām is the sole right of the Most Sacred Being that has created it. No one is permitted to interfere in this matter. Therefore, those who consider good dress and good food made lawful by Allah as something Ḥarām for themselves deserve the wrath and punishment from Allah. Living in tattered rags despite having the means is no teaching of Islam, nor is it something considered worth emulation in Islam as some ignorant people think.

Many among the early righteous elders and juristic Imāms of Islam whom Allah had been blessed with good means would often times wear elegant, even expensive dresses. Our own master, may the bless ing of Allah and peace be upon him, when his means allowed it, has adorned his body with the best of dresses. According to one narration, once when he came out, there was on his blessed body a Ridā' the price of which was one thousand dirhams. As reported by Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, he had used a Ridā' worth four hundred guineas. Similarly, Imām Mālik alway used decent and elegant dress. For him, someone had taken it on himself that he would provide three hundred and sixty pairs of dresses annually for his use. And a pair which adorned his body for a day would not be used again because after having been worn for one day, he would give this dress to some poor student.

The reason is that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said: When Allah Ta'ālā blesses a servant of His with extended means, He likes to see the effect of His blessing on things around him, his dress being one of them. Therefore, to let such blessing become visible is also a form of showing gratitude. In contrast, there is the attitude of wearing worn-out or untidy clothes, despite having the means, which is ingratitude.

However, it is necessary to guard against two things, that is, from hypocricy and exhibitionism, and from pride and arrogance. It means that one should not dress well simply to show off before others or to establish that they were superior or special as compared to them. And it is obvious that the righteous elders of the early period were free from such attitudes.

As for the reported use of ordinary or patched dress by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه and some other Ṣaḥābah among the righteous elders is concerned, it had two reasons. First of all, whatever came in their hands as their income, they would spend it out over the poor and the needy, and in the pursuit of their religious objectives. For their own person, they would be left with too little to afford a nice dress. Then, they were leaders of people. They let themselves be in that simple and inexpensive bearing as it was so that others with extended means would get the message, and that common people and the poor and needy are not overwhelmed by their financial status.

The same thing holds valid in the case of the noble Ṣūfis (the group of rightly guided mystics in Islam who lay primary stress on spiritual purification). When they make new aspirants abstain from fine dresses and tasty foods, they really do not intend to say that leaving these things off for good is an act of *thawāb* or merit. Far from it. Instead of that, it is only to put the brakes on the wanton desires of the human self during the initial stage of the quest for truth that they would prescribe such regimen of striving, as treatment and medicine. When the aspirant reaches a stage where he has learnt to control the desires of his self and it can no more be attracted to and snared by what is Ḥarām and impermissible, then, at that time, all masters of the spiritual orders would use and recommend good dress and tasty foods like the general body of early righteous elders. When done at that time, these

fine blessings of human sustenance become for them the source of knowing their Creator and achieving nearness to Him - rather becoming impediments (through any lack of gratitude or truimph of desires as it is likely in the early stage).

The Sunnah of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم in Food and Dress

About food and dress, the essential way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, the Ṣaḥabah and the Tābi'īn is that one should not be unnaturally concerned about these. Dress and food within easy access are good enough and should be used gratefully. If the dress is coarse and the food dry, there is no need to go to the trouble of finding something better one way or the other - even if one has to borrow, or that one starts worrying about what one misses so much that one lands himself into some other trouble.

Similarly, when good dress and food are naturally available, one should not go to the extreme trouble of spoiling them or avoiding their use. Thus, the way the seeking of good dress and good food is a self-imposed constraint, very similarly, doing the opposite of it, that is, to spoil what is good and to leave it aside in favour of what is bad, is also a self-imposed constraint - and a blameworthy one.

Why should this be done? The next sentence of the verse explains the wisdom behind it. It says that all blessings, which include fine dresses and nice foods, have really been created for obedient believers. Others are enjoying these because of them - because this world is the venue of deeds not the venue of rewards. You cannot draw a line of distinction between the genuine and the counterfeit, the good and the bad in the matter of blessings available in this mortal world. Here, the feast is open to all. The blessings are there from the All-Merciful. He is Al-Raḥmān for this whole world. But, the arrangements in this world obey the will of Allah - and the customary practice of Allah in this world is: When the obedient believers in Allah fall short in their duties to Him, other people overcome them, grab the treasures of worldly blessings and, as a result, the believing servants of Allah become subjected to hunger and poverty.

But, this law operates within this mortal world of deeds only. Once in the Hereafter, all blessings and comforts shall be reserved for the

obedient servants of Allah. This is what the sentence: قُلْ هِيَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا خَالِصَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ in this verse means, that is, '(O prophet) you tell them that all blessings in the worldly life itself are really the right of the believers - and, on the day of *Qiyāmah*, they shall be theirs exclusively.'

Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه has explained this verse by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are - subject to the safeguard that they do not become a source of trouble for them in the Hereafter - are the rightful share of obedient believers only. Contrary is the case of disbelievers and sinners who, though they too receive these blessing in their mortal life, rather receive more of it, but these blessings of theirs are going to become their nemesis in the Hereafter bringing punishment which will last for ever. Therefore, as the outcome shows, this is not the kind of comfort and honour one would welcome.

Some other commentators have determined its meaning by saying that all blessings and comforts of the world are laced with ceaseless striving, the apprehension of decline and never-ending anxiety. Pure blessing and pure comfort simply do not exist here. However, whoever gets these blessings on the day of Judgement, they will have them in the state of absolute purity. There will be no striving for it, no apprehension of decline or loss in it, nor any worries after it. The three explanations of the sense of this sentence in this verse as given above could be accomodated therein and that is why commentators among the Ṣaḥabah and Tābi'īn have gone by them.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذَٰلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ (This is how We elaborate the verses for people who understand). This verse carries a refutation of the excessive deeds and ignorant views of people who suggested that Allah Ta'ālā is pleased with the practice of abandoning good dress and good food.

After that, the second verse takes up the description of some of the things declared unlawful by Allah Ta'ālā forsaking which really brings His pleasure. The hint given here is that these people were suffering from a twofold ignorance. On the one hand, they deprived themselves of the good things of life Allah had made lawful for them by denying to use them as if they were unlawful - and did so for no reason. Then, on

the other hand, there were things genuinely and really unlawful, things the use of which was to result in the wrath of Allah and the punishment of the Hereafter, these they embraced with both arms only to discover that they had embraced what was to be their undoing in the life-to-come. Thus, they were doubly deprived, deprived of the blessings they had in the mortal world and deprived of the blessings they had the chance of having in the Hereafter. After that, says the Qur'ān:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ وَالْإِثْمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزِّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Say, "My Lord has prohibited only the shameful things, what is apparent from them and what is hidden, and sin and unjust aggression, and that you associate with Allah something for which He has not sent any authority, and that you say about Allah what you do not know - 33.

In the detail given above, the word: إِثْم (*ithm* : sin) covers all sins which fall on one personally - and in: بَغْى (*baghy* : injustice) included there are sins which relate to rights and dealings as concerning others. Then come Shirk, the associating of partners with Allah, and the forging of lies against Him. That they are grave sins is quite evident.

This particular detail was mentioned here also because it covers almost all kinds of prohibitions and sins - whether they pertained to belief or conduct, or were done personally, or related to rights of others which were usurped. This was done also because these people of the Jāhiliyyah were involved with all these crimes and prohibitions. Thus, exposed here was another demonstration of their ignorance which was that they would abstain from what was made lawful for them and would not even hesitate to use what was declared to be unlawful.

Unfortunately, it is a necessary outcome of excess (*ghuluww*) in religion and introduction of self-invented practices (*bid'āt*) in it that people who get involved with this type of activity become habitually heedless to the root of religion and its essential requirements. Therefore, the harm caused by excess in religion and innovation in established faith is twofold. First of all getting involved with such *Ghuluww* and *Bid'ah* is a sin in itself. Then, seen in contrast, far too grave is the very

deprivation from the true religion of Allah and the genuine way of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Refuge with Allah (from such a fate)!

The first and the second verse both mentioned two crimes committed by disbelievers. They took Ḥalāl as Ḥarām and made the Ḥarām become Ḥalāl for themselves by themselves. The third verse (34) describes their sad end and the punishment they would have in the Hereafter. It was said:

وَلِكُلِّ اُمَّةٍ اَجَلٌ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ

(And for every people there is an appointed time. So, when their appointed time comes, they will not be late for a moment, nor will they go before).

In other words, what is being said here is that those committing excesses who, despite their contumacy, are basking in the sunshine of the blessings of Allah Ta'ālā, and do not seem to be anywhere close to being punished, they should not lose sight of the customary practice of Allah that He, in His infinite mercy, keeps granting a long leash to sinners so that they would somehow stop doing what they do. But, the term of this leash and the time of this respite stands determined in the ultimate knowledge of Allah Ta'ālā. When that time comes, it just comes - neither too late nor too soon. Thus, criminals are caught in punishment. At times, the punishment descends right here in this world - and if, the punishment does not visit them here, it waits to receive them soon after their death.

As for the appointed time not being late or early as stated in this verse, it is a manner of saying, something like saying to a salesperson in a store: What is your last price, more or less? It is obvious that the inquiry is for the lower price, not the higher. But, it is put there as a subordinate suffix. Similarly, the real objective here is to state that there will be no delay after the appointed time. The mention of 'before' along with 'late' makes it closer to common comprehension.

Verses 35 - 39

يٰبَنِيْٓ اٰدَمَ اِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ فَمَنِ
اتَّقٰى وَاَصْلَحَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ

كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوْا عَنْهَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيْهَا
خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ فَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اَوْ كَذَّبَ
بِاٰيٰتِهٖ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ يَنَالُهُمْ نَصِيْبُهُمْ مِّنَ الْكِتٰبِ ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا جَآءَتْهُمْ
رُسُلُنَا يَتَوَفَّوْنَهُمْ ۙ قَالُوْٓا اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَدْعُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالُوْا
ضَلُّوْا عَنَّا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ قَالَ
ادْخُلُوْا فِيْٓ اُمَمٍ قَدْ خَلَتْ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ فِى النَّارِ ؕ
كُلَّمَا دَخَلَتْ اُمَّةٌ لَّعَنَتْ اُخْتَهَا ؕ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا ادَّارَكُوْا فِيْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۙ
قَالَتْ اُخْرٰىهُمْ لِاُوْلٰىهُمْ رَبَّنَا هٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَضَلُّوْنَا فَاٰتِهِمْ عَذَابًا ضِعْفًا
مِّنَ النَّارِ ؕ قَالَ لِكُلٍّ ضِعْفٌ وَّلٰكِنْ لَّا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَقَالَتْ
اُوْلٰىهُمْ لِاُخْرٰىهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فَذُوْقُوا الْعَذَابَ
بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾

O children of 'Ādam, if messengers from among you come to you narrating My verses before you, then, whoever fears Allah and corrects (himself), for them there shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. [35]

And those who belie Our verses and stand arrogant against them - those are the people of the Fire. There they shall live for ever. [36]

So, who is more unjust than the one who coins a lie against Allah or belies His signs? They shall receive their share from what is written until when Our messengers shall come to them to take their souls, they shall say, "Where is that which you used to call besides Allah?" They will say, "They are lost to us" and they shall testify against themselves that they were disbelievers. [37]

He (Allah) will say, "Enter the Fire with peoples who passed before you, the Jinn and the human beings." Whenever a people enter, they will curse their fellows until when they shall gather there together, the last of them will say of the first of them, "Our Lord, they

misguided us; so, give them a double punishment of the Fire." He will say, "For each there is a double, but you do not know." [38] And the first of them will say to the last of them, "So you have no superiority over us. Now, taste the punishment for what you have been earning." [39]

Verses 40 - 43

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا عَنْهَا لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ أَبْوَابُ
السَّمَاءِ وَلَا يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتَّىٰ يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِي سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ ۚ
وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ لَهُم مِّن جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَمِن فَوْقِهِمْ
غَوَاشٍ ۚ وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
الصَّالِحَاتِ لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ ۖ هُمْ
فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِم مِّنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِي مِن
تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ ۖ وَقَالُوا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي هَدَانَا لِهَٰذَا وَمَا كُنَّا
لِنَهْتَدِيَ لَوْلَا أَنْ هَدَانَا اللَّهُ ۖ لَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۖ
وَنُودُوا أَن تِلْكُمُ الْجَنَّةُ أُورِثْتُمُوهَا بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Surely, those who have belied Our signs and stood arrogant against them, the gates of the heavens shall not be opened for them, and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle. And this is how We recompense the sinners. [40] For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings. And this is how We recompense the transgressors. [41]

And those who believe and do good deeds - Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity - they are the people of Paradise; they shall remain there for ever. [42] And We will remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them. And they will say, "All praise to Allah who has led us unto this. And we were not to find the way, had Allah not guided us, surely, the messengers of our Lord came with

truth." And they will be given a call, "Here is the Paradise. This you have been made to inherit for the deeds you have been doing." [43]

Commentary

Mentioned first in the set of verses cited above (35-37) is a pledge taken from every human being in the world of spirits, before being born into the material world. The pledge envisaged that they would, when the prophets of Allah come to them with Divine guidance and injunctions, listen to them in earnest and act accordingly. They were also told that those who abide by the pledge and fulfill what it entails, will have their salvation from sorrows and deserve eternal peace and comfort. And conversely, those who belie prophets or rebel against injunctions they bring shall have the eternal punishment of Jahannam waiting for them. The later set of verses presents what actually happened when different groups of human beings came into the world and started acting differently. Some of them threw the pledge behind their backs and settled to oppose it. Others held to it and acted righteously. The ultimate end of the two groups and the reward and punishment for them has been described in the later four verses (40-43).

Mentioned in verses 40 and 41 are deniers and criminals, and in verses 42 and 43, the believers and God-fearing who fulfilled the pledge.

In the first verse (40), it was said that those who belied the prophets of Allah and acted arrogantly against Divine guidance and 'Āyāt, for them, the gates of heaven will not be opened.

Reported in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ is a Tafsīr of this verse from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ which says that the gates of heaven will be opened neither for them, nor for their prayers. It means that their prayer will not be answered and their deeds will be stopped from reaching the place where the deeds of the righteous servants of Allah are kept preserved, the name of which, according to the Qur'ān, is: عِلِّيِّيْنَ ('Illiyyīn) (Sūrah Al-Mutaffifin - 83:18-21). This subject has been referred to in yet another verse of the Qur'ān where it is said: اِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ وَالْعَمَلُ الصَّالِحُ يَرْفَعُهٗ, that is, 'one's good words are taken to Allah Ta'ālā and one's good deed carries them' meaning that man's good deeds become the cause of Ṭayyib Kalimāt (good words) reaching Allah Ta'ālā.

In a narration from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās and other Ṣaḥābah رضى الله عنهم اجمعين, the Tafsīr of the verse also says that the gates of heaven will not be opened for the spirits of deniers and disbelievers - and these spirits will be thrown down. This subject is supported by a Ḥadīth of Sayyidnā Barā' ibn 'Āzib رضى الله عنه which has been reported in detail by Abū Dāwūd, Nasa'ī, Ibn Mājah and Imām Aḥmad, a summary of which is given below.

The Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم went to a Janāzah of some Anṣarī Companion. The grave was not ready yet, so he sat down on an open spot. The Companions sat around him, silent. He raised his head and said: When the time of death comes for a believing servant of Allah, angels with white, radiant faces come from the heaven with the shroud and fragrance of the heaven and sit down in front of the person to die. Then, comes the angel of death, 'Izrā'īl عليه السلام and he addresses his Rūḥ (spirit, soul): O soul at peace, come out to receive the forgiveness and pleasure of your *Rabb*. Then, his Rūḥ comes out of the body, nice and easy, just like water coming out of a leather water-bag when opened. The angel of death receives his Rūḥ in his hands and entrusts it with the angels sitting there. These angels start moving out with the Rūḥ of the deceased. Wherever they meet a group of angels on their way, they are asked: Whose sacred Rūḥ is it? These angels introduce the Rūḥ of the deceased by his name and title with which he was known as a mark of respect in his life of the world. They tell him who he is, so and so, son of so and so. Then, comes the time when these angels reach the first heaven with the Rūḥ. They ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is opened. More angels join them from here until they reach as far as the seventh heaven. At that time, Allah Ta'ālā says: Write down the record of the deeds of this servant of Mine in the *'Illiyyīn* and then send him back. The Rūḥ returns to the grave again. In the grave come angels who keep the account of deeds. They make him sit up, and ask him: 'Who is your Rabb?' and 'what is your religion?' He says: Allah Ta'ālā is my Rabb and Islam is my religion. Then, comes the question: This pious person who has been sent for you - who is he? He says: He is the Rasūl of Allah Ta'ālā. Then comes a heavenly call: My servant is true. Roll out for him the carpet of Jannah. Dress him up in the apparel of Paradise. Open for him the door towards the Jannah. Through the door come the fragrance and breeze of Jannah

and his good deed transformed into a handsome presence comes near him to help him become familiar and rested in company.

In contrast, when the time of death comes for disbelievers and deniers, angels with dark and terrifying profile come from the heaven carrying a coarse piece of ragged rug and sit down in front of him. Then, the angel of death draws his Rūḥ out as if it were a thorny branch with wet wool wrapped round it and through it the thorny branch was to be pulled out. When this Rūḥ comes out, its stench is deadlier than the stench of a spoiled dead animal. The angels start moving out with the Rūḥ of the deceased. When other angels meet enroute, they ask: Whose evil Rūḥ is this? The angels tell them the worst of his name and title with which he was known in the world. They tell them that he is so and so, the son of so and so. Until they reach the first heaven and ask for the gate to be opened. The gate is not opened for him. The command comes to keep his record of deeds in Sijjīn where the record of the disobedient ones is maintained. His Rūḥ is thrown away. The Rūḥ returns to the grave. The angels responsible for account-taking make him sit up. They ask him the same questions they had asked the believer. His answer to every question is nothing but: هَاهْ هَاهْ لَا أَدْرِىْ (O O, I do not know). He is given the bed of Jahannam and the dress of Jahannam. In his grave, a door is opened toward the Jahannam through which he keeps receiving the heat and flames of Jahannam. His grave is made to become straightened on him. We seek the refuge of Allah from it.

To sum up, it can be said that the spirits of deniers and disbelievers are taken upto the gate of the heaven. When the door does not open, they are thrown back from there. The verse: لَا تُفَتَّحُ لَهُمْ اَبْوَابُ السَّمَآءِ (the gates of the heavens will not be opened for them - 41) may also mean that it is at the time of death that the gates of the heavens are not opened for them.

Towards the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا يَدْخُلُوْنَ الْجَنَّةَ حَتّٰى يَلِجَ الْجَمَلُ فِىْ سَمِّ الْخِيَاطِ (and they shall not enter the Paradise unless a camel enters into the eye of a needle). Here, the word: يَلِجَ (*yalij*) is from: وُلُوْج (*wulūj*) which means to enter a narrow opening. *Jamal* is camel and *Samm*, the eye of a needle. The translation covers the meaning literally. The sense of the verse is that the camel is a big animal and its entry into the eye of

a needle is functionally impossible. So, equally impossible is their entry into Paradise. The purpose is to state that the punishment of Hell for them is everlasting. Then, follow the words which describe the added severity of the punishment in Hell: لَهُمْ مِّنْ جَهَنَّمَ مِهَادٌ وَّ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ غَوَاشٍ (For them there is a bed from the Jahannam, and over them there are coverings). The word: مِهَاد (*mihād*) means a place of rest, bed or floor and: غَوَاشٍ (*ghawāsh*) is the plural form of: غَاشِيَة (*ghāshiyah*) which means something which covers. The sense is that for these people to rest, the bed and the top sheet will all come from Hell (an eloquent manner of putting the extreme severity of the punishment in everyday idiom). It will be noticed that at the end of the first verse, which mentions the deprivation from Paradise, it was said: وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ (And this is how We recompense the sinners). Then, in the second verse, which describes the punishment of Hell, it was said: وَكَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And this is how We recompense the transgressors) because it is more severe than the former.

The third verse (42) mentions those who dutifully follow Divine injunctions as they are the people of Paradise and there they shall live for ever.

Injunctions of the Sharī'ah : Consideration of Convenience

But, along with the condition set forth for such people - that they believe and do good deeds - said there, in all mercy, was: لَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا وُسْعَهَا (Allah does not obligate anyone beyond his capacity). The purpose is to emphasize that good deeds - which is a condition for entry into Paradise - is really not something so difficult as would be beyond the ability of a man or woman. In fact, Allah Ta'ālā has made the injunctions of the Shari'ah flexible and easy in every department of life. Leaves and concessions have been granted in every injunction keeping sickness, weakness, travel and other human needs under consideration.

According to Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, when human beings were commanded to do good deeds, the likelihood existed that they might find this a little heavy on them since doing what is good and required, everywhere and under all conditions, was beyond one's capacity. Therefore, this doubt of theirs was removed through these words which ensure that the injunctions of Allah are given keeping in view

the various stages of human lives and that they are appropriate to prevailing conditions in all circumstances, for all time and all places. With such comprehensive consideration working behind these injunctions acting according to them should not be difficult at all.

For its People, a Paradise minus Malice

In the fourth verse (43), two particular states of the people of Jannah have been identified. The first one finds mention in: وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْاَنْهٰرُ (And We remove whatever of malice they had in their hearts. Rivers will flow beneath them).

According to Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, when believers would have crossed the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ and their deliverance from Jahannam would have become certain, they would be stopped over a bridge between Jannah and Jahannam - to remove their malice first. If someone had some grudge against someone, or ill-will or a heart-burn on the loss of a right, all that will be mutually settled and washed off for good right there. So, when they go to Jannah, they will be free of malice, hatred, animosity and other personality disorders of the kind.

It appears in Tafsīr Maẓharī that this bridge will obviously be the last part of the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ which is close to Jannah. 'Allāma Al-Suyuṭī has also opted for this approach.

Then comes the issue of settling rights. It goes without saying that any loss of rights cannot be compensated by money for nobody would have it there. Instead of that, in accordance with a Ḥadīth in al-Bukhārī and Muslim, this payment will be made in the currency of deeds. Lost rights will be compensated by giving the deeds of the usurper to the owner of the right. And should it be that no more deeds are left with this person and there remain other rights which still have to be settled, then, the sins of the owner of the unsettled right will be transferred to the account of the usurper of the right.

In a Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has called the person, who did good deeds in his worldly life but remained negligent of the rights of people, the greatest pauper - for as a result of this neglect he lost all good deeds and stood there empty-handed.

In this Ḥadīth narration, what has been described is but a general rule governing the fulfillment of rights and avenging an injustice in-

flicted. But, it is not necessary that everyone has to face this situation. In fact, according to the report of Ibn Kathīr and Tafsīr Maẓharī, possible there would be the situation that no one settles scores and takes revenge, yet mutual malices get to be removed without anything like that.

This is what appears in some narrations. When people would have crossed the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, they would reach a stream of water and drink from it. The property of this water will be such as would remove all mutual malice from the hearts of all of them. While commenting on the noble verse: وَسَقٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُوْرًا (And their Lord will give to them to drink a pure drink - 76:21 - AYA), the Tafsīr of this verse given by Imām al-Qurṭubī is not any different when he says that washed away from this water of Jannah shall be all grudges in hearts.

After reciting this verse, Sayyidnā 'Alī al-Murtaḍā رضی اللہ عنہ once said: I hope that we - 'Uthmān and Ṭalḥah and Zubayr and me - shall be among those whose hearts will be cleansed of malice before the entry into Paradise. (Ibn Kathīr) These noble souls named here had their mutual disagreements during their life time in the world which had reached the limits of war.

The second state of the people of Jannah described in this verse is that on their arrival in Jannah, they will express their gratitude to Allah Ta'ālā that He guided them towards Jannah and made it easy for them to reach there. They will say that, had the grace of Allah not been with them, they would have never dared reach there.

This tells us that no one can go to Jannah by personal effort alone - unless the grace of Allah Ta'ālā makes it possible for the aspirant. The reason is that even this 'effort' itself is not within one's control. That too comes through the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā alone.

Guidance has Degrees, the Last being the Entry into Paradise

Imām Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, who has explained *Hidāyah* or guidance in a comprehensive manner as it appears in the Holy Qur'ān, has said that guidance is a popular term but it has different degrees. The truth of the matter is that guidance is another name of finding the way to reach Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, the degrees of achieving nearness to Allah are many and different and unending. Similarly, the degrees of

guidance too are extremely varied and different from each other. The lowest degree of guidance is deliverance from Kufr and Shirk, and having *'Imān*. One on this degree of guidance has his or her orientation changed, away from the path of error - towards Allah. Then, there is the distance between Allah Ta'ālā and His servants. This distance takes a journey to cover - and every stage so covered has degrees, which is called *Hidāyah* or guidance. Therefore, guidance is a need. At no time, can anyone claim not to need it, not even prophets and messengers of Allah. For this reason, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم, not only taught his people the lesson of: اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ (Guide us in the straight path), but he himself kept making this prayer - because there is no end to the stages and ranks of nearness to Allah, so much so, that entry into the Paradise mentioned in this verse has been identified as *Hidāyah* or guidance, for this is the last station of *Hidāyah*.*

Verses 44 - 49

وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ اَصْحٰبَ النَّارِ اَنْ قَدْ وَجَدْنَا مَا وَعَدَنَا
رَبُّنَا حَقًّا فَهَلْ وَجَدْتُّمْ مَّا وَعَدَ رَبُّكُمْ حَقًّا ؕ قَالُوْا نَعَمْ ۚ فَاَذَّنَ
مُؤَذِّنٌۢ بَيْنَهُمْ اَنْ لَّعْنَةُ اللّٰهِ عَلَى الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَصُدُّوْنَ
عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَيَبْغُوْنَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَهُمْ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ كٰفِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَ
بَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۚ وَعَلَى الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَّعْرِفُوْنَ كُلًّاۢ بِسِيْمٰىهُمْ ۚ
وَنَادَوْا اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ۟ لَمْ يَدْخُلُوْهَا وَهُمْ
يَطْمَعُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَاِذَا صُرِفَتْ اَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَآءَ اَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ ۙ
قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ
الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالًا يَّعْرِفُوْنَهُمْ بِسِيْمٰىهُمْ قَالُوْا مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنْكُمْ
جَمْعُكُمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ اَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ اَقْسَمْتُمْ
لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ ؕ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَآ اَنْتُمْ

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* Those interested in reading more about the implications, meaning and degrees of guidance may see Ma'ariful-Qur'an, English Translation, Vol.I, pages 72-77.

تَحْزَنُوْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And the people of Paradise will call out to the people of the Fire saying, "We have found true what our Lord had promised to us. Have you, then, found true what your Lord had promised?" They will say, "Yes." Then, an announcer between them will call out, "The curse of Allah is on the wrongdoers [44] **who turn away from the way of Allah seeking crookedness in it, and they are the deniers of the Hereafter."** [45]

And between the two groups there will be a partition. And on A'raf (the Heights), there shall be people who will recognize both through their signs, and they will call out to the people of Paradise, "Peace on you." They have not entered it, yet they hope to. [46] **And when their eyes will be turned to the people of the Fire, they will say, "Our Lord, do not put us in the company of the unjust people."** [47]

And the people of A'raf will call out to the people whom they would recognize through their signs saying, "Your masses did not help you, nor the arrogance you were used to. [48] **Is it these for whom you swore that Allah will not reach them with mercy?" - "Enter the Paradise; there is no fear on you, nor shall you grieve."** [49]

Commentary

When the people of Paradise will reach Paradise, where they belong, and the people of Hell, will reach Hell, where they belong, it is evident that the two places will be far apart from each other in all respects. But, despite this being so, many verses of the Holy Qur'ān confirm that in between the two places, there will be points from where one could see the other, and engage in an exchange of conversation.

In Sūrah Al-Ṣāffāt, mentioned there are two persons who had known each other in their mortal life. But, one of them was a believer while the other, a disbeliever. In the Hereafter, when the believer will go to Paradise and the disbeliever, to Hell - they will notice each other and talk. Says the verse: فَاطَّلَعَ فَرَاٰهُ فِىْ سَوَآءِ الْجَحِيْمِ قَالَ تَاللّٰهِ اِنْ كِدْتَّ لَتُرْدِيْنِ ہ وَلَوْ لَا نِعْمَةُ رَبِّىْ لَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِيْنَ ہ اَفَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَيِّتِيْنَ اِلَّا مَوْتَتَنَا الْاُوْلٰى وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمُعَذَّبِيْنَ (37:55): In brief, it means when the friend in Paradise will look for the friend in Hell, he will find

him lying in the middle of it. He will curse him commenting that he wanted him to be ruined like him and had it not been for the grace of Allah, he too would have been found lying in Hell like him. Then he would remind him of his saying to him in the mortal world that there was to be no life, no accounting, no reward, and no punishment after death. He could now see for himself what was happening in reality.

Such dialogues, questions and answers exchanged between the people of Paradise and the people of Hell appear not only in the verses cited above, but continue after that as well, through almost one section.

As for these access points in between Paradise and Hell from where inmates could be seen and addressed, these would really be a different kind of punishment for the people of Hell who would find themselves being reproached from all sides. Then, as they see the blessings being enjoyed by the people of Paradise, they will find themselves burning in rage for having missed those - and burning in Hell they already will be. As for the people of Paradise, they will have another kind of comfort when, after seeing the plight of those in Hell, they will be more grateful for the blessings they had the good fortune of having. Then, they would remember people who mocked at them for believing and they could nothing against them, and when they see them disgraced and punished ultimately, they would have the last laugh at their undoing. The same thing has been said in Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifīn:

فَالْيَوْمَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنَ الْكُفَّارِ يَضْحَكُونَ ۙ عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ يَنْظُرُونَ ۝ هَلْ ثُوِّبَ الْكُفَّارُ مَا كَانُوا يَفْعَلُونَ .

But, on this Day, those who believed will be laughing at the disbelievers. They will be on raised couches watching (the denouement). Would have the disbelievers not been repaid for what they used to do? - 83:34-36.

Against the erring record of the people of Hell, admonition will also come from the angels. Addressing them, they will say:

هَٰذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ۝ أَفَسِحْرٌ هَٰذَا أَمْ أَنْتُمْ لَا تُبْصِرُونَ

This is the Fire that you used to belie. Then (look), is this a magic, or is it that you do not see? - 52:14-15

Similarly, it is in the first of the cited verses that the people of Paradise will tell the people of Hell that they found the promise of blessings and comforts made by their Lord absolutely true and then they will ask them if the punishment against which they were warned actually came to them, or not. They will admit that they did see it.

In support of this question and answer between them, some angel shall, with the will of Allah, proclaim that cursed be the unjust who used to prevent people from the path of Allah and wished that their way too became crooked like their own and denied the Hereafter.

Who are the People of A'rāf?

As a corrollary of the dialogue between those in Paradise and Hell, there is something else pointed to in this verse - that there will be some people who had their deliverance from Hell but had not yet found entry into Paradise, though they did hope that they would. These people are called the people of A'rāf.

What is A'rāf? This is explained by the verses of Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd (58). They tell us that there will be three groups of people on the day of Resurrection. (1) Declared disbelievers and polytheists who will never make it to the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, to begin with, because they will be thrown into the Hell through its doors before that stage comes; (2) believers who will have the light of Faith with them; and (3) hypocrites - since they have been tailing Muslims in the physical world, they will start behind them on the same trail. When they begin walking on the Bridge of Ṣirāṭ, a dense darkness will overtake all of them. The believers will still keep moving ahead with the help of their light of Faith while the hypocrites will call and ask them to stop and wait for them so that they could make use of the light they have. Thereupon, a caller for the sake of Allah will call: Turn back. Find your light there. The message given would be that the light they were seeking was the light of Faith and Righteous Deeds which could only be acquired at a place which they have left behind. Those who failed to acquire this light there through Faith and Deed shall not enjoy the benefit of that light here. In this state, a wall would be made to stand in between the hypocrites and the believers. The wall would have a gate. Beyond this gate, there will be nothing but punishment all over. Inside the gate there will be believers and the atmosphere will be filled with the mercy of

Allah and the view of Paradise. This is the subject of the following verse from Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd:

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ ۚ قِيْلَ ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا ۗ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ۗ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ .

The Day the hypocrites, the men and the women, will say to those who had believed: "Wait for us. Let us have a share from your light," it will be said, "Return behind you, then seek light." So, put between them will be a wall with a gate in it. Inside it, there will be mercy all over; and outside it, the Punishment face to face - 57:13.

In the verse quoted above, the wall which will be placed to separate the people of Paradise from the people of Hell has been called: سُوْر (*sūr*). This word is primarily used for a security wall built around a major city, usually made wide and fortified and posted where are army guards who stay in bunkers and remain vigilant against any enemies.

Verse 46 of Sūrah Al-A'rāf says: وَبَيْنَهُمَا حِجَابٌ ۚ وَعَلَى الْاَعْرَافِ رِجَالٌ يَّعْرِفُوْنَ كُلًّا ۢ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ (And between the two groups there will be a partition). According to Ibn Jarīr and other Tafsīr authorities, in this verse, the word: حِجَاب (*ḥijāb*) means the same wall which has been called: سُوْر (*sūr*) in Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd. The top portion of the wall is known as Al-A'rāf because it is the plural form of 'Urf and 'Urf refers to the top portion of everything as it is distinct and recognizable from a distance. From this explanation we know that the top portion of the partition wall between Paradise and Hell is the A'rāf. Then, the verse of the Sūrah tells us that on the day of Resurrection there will be some people at this place who would be seeing the happenings in Paradise and Hell both and will be talking to people on both sides.

As for who these people shall be and why would they be made to stop here, it is something in which commentators differ and the narrations of Ḥadīth vary. But, what is sound, weighty and acceptable with the majority of commentators is that these people will be the ones whose good and bad deeds will come out equal in weight on the Scale of Deeds. So, because of their good deeds, they will have their deliverance from Hell, but - because of their sins - they would have not been

admitted into the Paradise yet. Finally, they too will find entry into Paradise because of the grace and mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

This is what Sayyidnā Hudhayfah, Ibn Mas'ūd and Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه, from among the Ṣaḥabah, as well as other Ṣaḥabah and Tabi'īn say. Then, in it converge narrations of Ḥadīth reported variously. Ibn Jarir reports from Sayyidnā Ḥudhayfah رضى الله عنه that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked about the people of A'rāf. He said: These are people whose good and bad deeds will be equal. Therefore, from Jahannam they stand delivered. But, in Jannah they have not entered yet. They were stopped at this place of the A'rāf until the process of accounting of deeds and the judgement is over. Their fate would be decided after that and ultimately they will be forgiven and admitted into Jannah. (Ibn Kathīr)

There is a narration from Sayyidnā Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh reported by Ibn Marduwayh in which it is said that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم was asked as to who were the people of A'rāf? He said: They are people who took part in Jihād without the pleasure and permission of their parents and laid down their lives in the way of Allah. So, the disobedience to parents stopped them from entering into the Paradise and their *shahādah* in the way of Allah stopped them from entering into the Hell.

The two Āḥadīth quoted above have no element of contradiction. Instead of that, this Ḥadīth is an example of those whose virtues and vices are equal in the same degree as here - martyrdom in the way of Allah on one side and disobedience to parents on the other. The scale is equal. (Ibn Kathīr)

Salam Greetings : Blessed Legacy of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

After having gone through the description and definition of the people of A'rāf, we can now take up the subject of the verse itself which says that the people of A'rāf will call out the people of Paradise and say: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (*Salāmun 'Alaiykum*). This word of greeting is also used in our present world when we meet each other. This is offered as a gift, a mark of respect and grace felt for the person so greeted. This is *Masnūn*, a way of Sunnah as practiced and recommended to his community by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. This is also said to the dead while visiting their graves. Then, it will also be the form of greeting on the

plain of Resurrection, and in Paradise as well. But, a closer look at the verses of the Qur'ān and the narrations of Ḥadīth tells us that saying: "اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكُمْ" (As-Salāmu 'Alaiykum) is Masnūn as long as we live in this world. Then, after having passed away from this mortal world, what is Masnūn is saying: "سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ" (Salāmun 'Alaiykum) - without the letters Alif and Lām at the beginning of Salām. The words to be said at the time of visiting graves as mentioned in the Qur'ān also appear in this form, that is: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا صَبَرْتُمْ فَنِعْمَ عُقْبَى الدَّارِ : Peace on you [*Salāmun 'Alaiykum*] for that you observed patience. Then, fair is the ultimate abode - 13:24). And when the angels will receive the people of Paradise, this word appears in the same form there too: سَلٰمٌ عَلَيْكُمْ طِبْتُمْ فَادْخُلُوهَا خٰلِدِيْنَ : (*Salāmun 'Alaiykum* [Peace on you], you have done well. So, enter in it to live forever - 39:73). And here too, the people of A'rāf will greet the people of Paradise with the same words: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ (*Salāmun 'Alaiykum*).

Stated next is the status of the people of A'rāf that they have yet to enter Paradise, though they hope to. After that it is said: وَإِذَا صُرِفَتْ أَبْصَارُهُمْ تِلْقَآءَ أَصْحٰبِ النَّارِ قَالُوْا رَبَّنَا لَا تَجْعَلْنَا مَعَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ (And when their eyes will be turned towards the people of the Fire, they will say, "Our Lord, do not put us in the company of the unjust people - 47).

The fifth verse (48) also mentions that the people of A'rāf will address the people of Hell and admonish them by saying that the wealth and power that they depended on, and because of which they had become proud and arrogant, went the way of waste for all those strengths did not work for them at their hour of need.

Said in the sixth verse (49) is: أَهٰٓؤُلَآءِ الَّذِيْنَ أَقْسَمْتُمْ لَا يَنَالُهُمُ اللّٰهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ اُدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَآ أَنْتُمْ تَحْزَنُوْنَ (Is it these for whom you swore that Allah would not reach them with mercy?" - "Enter the Paradise; there is no fear on you, nor shall you grieve).

Explaining this, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ says: When the questions and anwers between the people of A'rāf and the people of Paradise and Hell both will be over, that will be the time when the Lord of all the worlds will address the people of Hell and tell them about the people of A'rāf that they swore that the people of A'rāf will not be forgiven their sins and mercy will not be shown to them. Then, there comes an immediate declaration of His mercy when the people of A'rāf will be told: Go and enter the Paradise. You should have

no fear of what had happened in the past nor should you have any anxiety about the future. (Ibn Kathīr)

Verses 50 - 53

وَنَادٰٓى اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ اَنْ اَفِيْضُوْا عَلَيْنَا مِنَ
الْمَآءِ اَوْ مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللّٰهُ ۭ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَهُمَا عَلَى
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّخَذُوْا دِيْنَهُمْ لَهْوًا وَّلَعِبًا وَّغَرَّتْهُمُ
الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا ۚ فَالْيَوْمَ نَنْسٰىهُمْ كَمَا نَسُوْا لِقَآءَ يَوْمِهِمْ هٰذَا ۙ
وَمَا كَانُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا يَجْحَدُوْنَ ﴿٥١﴾ وَلَقَدْ جِئْنٰهُمْ بِكِتٰبٍ فَصَّلْنٰهُ
عَلٰى عِلْمٍ هُدًى وَّرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٥٢﴾ هَلْ يَنْظُرُوْنَ اِلَّا
تَاْوِيْلَهٗ ۭ يَوْمَ يَاْتِيْ تَاْوِيْلُهٗ يَقُوْلُ الَّذِيْنَ نَسُوْهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَدْ
جَآءَتْ رُسُلُ رَبِّنَا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ فَهَلْ لَّنَا مِنْ شُفَعَآءَ فَيَشْفَعُوْا لَنَآ
اَوْ نُرَدُّ فَنَعْمَلَ غَيْرَ الَّذِيْ كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ ۭ قَدْ خَسِرُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ
وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَّا كَانُوْا يَفْتَرُوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾

And the people of Fire will call out to the people of Paradise, "Pour on us some water or some of what Allah has provided you." They will say, "Allah has prohibited these for disbelievers, [50] **who had taken their faith as play and game, and the worldly life has deceived them." So, today We shall forget them, as they forgot to face this day of theirs, and as they used to deny Our signs.** [51]

And surely We have brought them the Book We have elaborated, with knowledge, a guidance and mercy for people who believe. [52]

They are waiting for nothing but its final result. The day when its final result comes, those who had ignored it earlier will say, "Surely, the messengers of our Lord had come with truth. So, are there any intercessors for us who could intercede in our favour? Or, could we be sent back, so that we might do contrary to what we used to do?" They have put their selves to loss, and lost

from them are those whom they used to coin. [53]

Verse 54

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَٰوٰتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ
اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُغْشِي الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا ۙ وَّ
الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرٰتٍۭ بِأَمْرِهِۦ ۗ أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَ
الْأَمْرُ ۗ تَبٰرَكَ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِينَ ﴿٥٤﴾

Surely, your Lord is Allah who created the heavens and the earth in six days, then He positioned himself on the Throne. He covers the day with night which pursues it swiftly. And (He created) the sun and the moon and the stars, subjected to His command. Beware, for Him is the creation and the command. Glorious is Allah, the Lord of all the worlds. [54]

Commentary

Verse 54 begins with the statement that Allah has created the heavens and the earth and the planets and the stars and that they perform their functions under a firmly established system. The statement releases an inevitable suggestion that the maker of this system has the most perfect power conceivable. This, in turn, invites every reasonable human being to think. Here is the most sacred Being who is capable of bringing this great universe from non-being to the state of being and who can keep it functioning through the wisest of systems. Why would it be difficult for him to undo everything and recreate it once again on the day of *Qiyāmah*? For human beings, the best course is to stop denying the *Qiyāmah* and turn to the same Being as their Rabb who is their Master and Nurturer. From Him they should seek what they need and Him alone they should worship. Let them come out of the quagmire of worshiping their own kind and recognize the truth. Said herein was: 'Surely, your Lord is Allah - Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.'

The Creation of the Heavens and the Earth: Why in Six Days?

A question arises here. We know that Allah Ta'ālā has great power. He is capable of creating the whole universe in a single moment. The Holy Qur'ān itself says so time and again. For instance, in Sūrah Al-

Qamar, it is said: وَمَآ أَمْرُنَآ إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ (And Our Command is but a single Word, - like the twinkling of an eye - 54:50). Again, in Sūrah Yā Sīn, it is said: إِذَآ أَرَادَ شَيْـًٔا أَنْ يَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ (when [Allah] intends [to create] a thing - for it He says: "Be" and it comes to be - 36:82). Why, then, would six days be spent in creating the universe?

Commentator of the Qur'ān, Sayyidnā Sa'īd ibn Jubayr رضی اللہ عنہ has given an answer by saying that Allah is certainly capable of creating everything there is in a single moment, but Divine wisdom so demanded that the creation of our universe take six days so that human beings could be taught the lesson of graduation and perfection in running the universal system. This is supported by a Ḥadīth in which the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said: Working with deliberation, dignity and graduation is from Allah Ta'ālā and hastening, from Shayṭān. (Maẓharī, with reference to Shu'ab al-'Īmān by Al-Baihaqī)

The implication is that the attitude of rushing into doing things is not good for human beings. One cannot give due thought to and take into consideration all aspects of an issue at hand if driven by haste. An action taken in haste spoils what is done and brings remorse in the end. So, whatever is done with proper advance thinking and functional ease brings Barakah (blessing from Allah which enhances the effeciency and outcome of the endeavour).

How were Days and Nights identified before the Creation of Earth, Heavens and Planets?

The second question is: The presence of the day and night is recognized through the movement of the sun. But, before the birth of the earth and the heavens, when there was no sun and moon, on what basis comes the count of six days?

For this reason, some commentators have said that six days means a time duration equal to six days and nights as in the existing world. But, a much clearer approach is that the terminology of day and night, that is, what occurs from sunrise to sunset is day and what appears from sunset to the next sunrise is night, is a terminology used in this world. May be, before the birth of the universe, Allah Ta'ālā had other signs determined for the day and night - as it would be in Paradise where the day and night will not depend on the movement of the sun.

This also tells us that it is not necessary that the six days during which the earth and the heavens were created, be equal to our six days. Instead, it is possible that they may be longer than these - as the Qur'ān says about the day of 'Ākhirah which will be equal to one thousand years.

Abū 'Abdullāh Rāzi has said that the movement of the far firmament is so fast as compared to the movements of our earth that the raised step of a man running here has still to come down to touch the ground when the far firmament moves a distance of three thousand miles. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal and Mujāhid say that six days here mean the six days of 'Ākhirah. The same view appears in a narration of Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ as reported by Ḍaḥḥāk.

And these six days during which the creation of the universe took place began, according to authentic narrations, from Friday and ended on Friday. On Yowm al-Sabt (the day of Sabbath), that is, Saturday, there was no work done on the creation of the universe. Some 'Ulama say that 'sabt' means to discontinue. The day was named as Yowm al-Sabt because the work of creation was over by that day. (Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr)

Mentioned in this verse is the creation of the universe in six days. Its details appear in verses 9 and 10 of Sūrah Ḥā Mīm As-Sajdah (Fuṣṣilāt - 41:9,10) saying that the earth was created in two days, then, created on the earth were, mountains, rivers, tributeries, trees, vegetation and things, human beings and animals could eat, in another two days. This comes to a total of four days. So, it was first said: خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ فِي يَوْمَيْنِ (created the earth in two days) and then it was said: قَدَّرَ فِيْهَآ أَقْوَاتَهَا فِيْٓ أَرْبَعَةِ أَيَّامٍ (and determined in it the measure of its sustenance in four days).

The first two days during which the earth was created are Sunday and Monday; and the other two days during which the mountains, rivers and the life support systems of the earth were created are Tuesday and Wednesday. Thereafter, it was said: فَقَضٰهُنَّ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ فِيْ يَوْمَيْنِ (that is, then We completed the seven heavens in two days - 41:13). As obvious, these two days will be Thursday and Friday. Thus, by Friday, this becomes a total of six days.

In the present verse (54), after mentioning the creation of the heavens and the earth, it was said: ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (then He positioned Himself on the Throne). The word: اِسْتَوٰى (*Istawā*), as followed by *'alā* (on) here, literally means to take position on, or to settle, or be established. The word: عَرْش (*'Arsh*) means throne. Now, the question is what is this throne, the throne of the great Raḥmān, and how is it shaped or constituted, or is as it is - and what would the phenomena of 'positioning' on it mean?

Regarding this, the safest creed to hold, that which is clear and correct, and fairly doubt-free too, is no other but that of the most righteous elders, the Ṣaḥabah and the Tabi'īn - and later, that of many Sūfi thinkers as well. The creed is that human reason is incapable of comprehending the reality of the Being and Attributes of Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu*. Pursuing the knowledge of its exact reality is an exercise in futility, even harmful. One should believe, as a matter of general principle, that the meaning intended by Allah Ta'ālā - whatever it may be - is the one correct and true. And, in this process, one should not try to determine or worry about fixing a meaning on one's own.

Someone asked the famous Imām Mālik exactly the same question: What is the meaning of : اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ (*Istawā 'ala al-'arsh* : positioned Himself on the throne)? He paused for a while, then said: 'Everyone knows the meaning of '*Istawā*,' and its particular nature and reality is such that human reason cannot comprehend it, and having faith in it is obligatory (Wājib), and asking a question about its nature and reality is Bid'ah (innovation in established religion) - because, the noble Ṣaḥabah, may Allah be pleased with them all, never asked such questions of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. Great elders (*Salaf*), Sufyān Al-Thawriy, Imām Awza'i, Layth ibn Sa'd, Sufyān ibn 'Uyaiynah and 'Abdullāh ibn Mubārak, may the mercy of Allah be upon them all, have said that the verses which have appeared in the Qur'ān as related to the Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā should be believed in as they have come and exactly as they are, without any explanation, explication and interpretation. (Maẓharī)

Said after that in the verse was: يُغْشِى الَّيْلَ النَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهٗ حَثِيْثًا (He covers the day with night which pursues it swifly). The sense is that this alternation of the night and day is a phenomenon of revolutionary proportions

in that it brings the whole world from light into the darkness, and from darkness into the light. Then, this very phenomena lends itself so swiftly and smoothly and obediently to the magnificent subduing power of Allah Ta'ālā that the least delay is not caused (in this transformation on such an unimaginable scale).

After that, it was said: وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرٰتٍۢ بِأَمْرِهٖ that is, Allah created the sun and the moon and the stars in a state that all of them are moving in obedience to His will and command.

For a reasonable person, this is an invitation to think, to think about things made by the made he observes around him all the time. Experts make machines of all sorts. Some of them would have engineering problems right from the start. Others may not have such problems, but machines are machines, no matter how strong the base material and how impeccable the design. Parts have their normal wear and tear, or need for adjustment, repairs, servicing. Machines become idle until fixed. It might take weeks, or months, to put them back to work. But, look at these God-made machines. The effeciency and the perfection with which they started working from day one is still there. They are working wonderfully non-stop. Their movement is as precise as ever, not a second fast or slow. There is no wear and tear of parts and no need to go to a workshop. The reason is that they are functioning 'subject to His command' (مُسَخَّرٰتٍۢ بِأَمْرِهٖ). In other words, they need no source of energy to move them, no engine to make them function. They are working only under Divine Command. They are subjected to that alone. Therefore, the emergence of the slightest malfunction in them is impossible. But, of course, when the Absolute Master Himself decides to eliminate them at a time appointed by Him, this entire system would disintegrate. That day will be the day of *Qiyāmah*.

After having pointed out some examples, the description of the Absolute Subduing Power of Allah Ta'ālā was put in the form of a general rule by saying: اَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْاَمْرُ (Beware, for Him alone is the creation and the command). The word: خَلْق (*khalq*) means to create and: أمْر (*amr*), to command. The sense is that being the Creator and the Master is exclusive to Him. Other than Him, no one else can create the most insignificant of things, nor does anyone have the right to subject anyone to his command (except that Allah Ta'ālā Himself delegates a particular area

of activity to someone, in which case that too would be, in reality, nothing but the command of Allah). So, the verse means that creating all these things was the work of none but Him, and putting them into service was also not something anyone else could handle, for that too is an spectacle of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

In Sūfi thought, 'Khalq' and 'Amr' are two domains. 'Khalq' relates to matter and 'Amr' to the refined abstract. The Qur'ānic verse: قُلِ الرُّوْحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّيْ (Say, "The soul is a command from my Lord." - 17:58) points out in this direction as "Rūḥ" (soul, spirit) has been identified as a command from the Lord. The sense of the creation and the command being exclusive to Allah Ta'ālā would, in this light, mean that everything between the heavens and the earth is from matter and its creation has been called "Khalq." And what is beyond these, free from matter, its creation has been called "Amr." (Maẓharī)

At the end of the verse, it was said: تَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (Glorious is Allah, the Lord of the worlds). The word: تَبَارَكَ (*tabarak*) appearing here is a derivation from *barakah* which means to increase, grow, become more, remain, sustain, besides being employed in many other shades of meaning. At this place, '*tabaraka*' means to be high and supreme. It can be taken in the sense of high and sustaining, for Allah Ta'ālā is both. The sense of high finds confirmation in a sentence of the Ḥadīth which says: تَبَارَكْتَ وَتَعَالَيْتَ يَا ذَا الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ (You are blessed and high, O Master of Glory and Honour). Here, the word: '*tabārkta*' has been explained by the word: *ta'ālaita* which follows.

Verses 55 - 56

اُدْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً ۭ اِنَّهٗ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِيْنَ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا وَادْعُوْهُ خَوْفًا وَّ طَمَعًا ۭ اِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللّٰهِ قَرِيْبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ ﴿٥٦﴾

Supplicate to your Lord humbly and secretly. Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits. [55]

And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. And supplicate to Him in fear and hope. Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds. [56]

Commentary

Mentioned in previous verses were particular manifestations of the perfect power of Allah Ta'ala, and His major blessings. The present verses lead us to consider: When He is the Master of perfect power, the sender of all blessings, and the Lord of all the worlds, it naturally follows that He should be the One to be called upon and prayed to under all circumstances, whether in distress or in need. The attitude of bypassing Him and turning towards some other direction is ignorance and failure.

Along with it, identified in these verses are some rules of etiquette to be followed when making Du'a' (prayer, supplication). If due consideration is given to these rules, the hope that a prayer will be answered increases.

The Meaning and Etiquette of *Du'a* and *Dhikr*

The word: دُعَاء (*Du'a'*), in the Arabic language, means to call upon someone to remove one's need. It is also used to remember in the absolute sense. Both meanings can be taken here. The verse says: اُدْعُوْا رَبَّكُمْ (Supplicate to your Lord) that is, call your Rabb for your needs, or remember your Rabb and worship Him.

In the first case, it would mean: Ask Allah alone for what you need. In the second case, the sense would be: Do your Dhikr and 'Ibadah for Him alone. Both these explanations have been reported from Tafsir authorities among the early righteous elders.

After that, it was said: تَضَرُّعًا وَّخُفْيَةً (humbly and secretly). The word: تَضَرُّع (*tadarru'*) means realization of inability, humility, and submission in a refined spirit of self-abasement (not found in the English language and its modern, secular, cultural context). And the word: خُفْيَة (*khufyah*) means secret, secluded, or private (as opposed to open and public - as used in English too, but with no relevance to the dominant sense of secret in English bearing on the mysterious, the occult, and the whole field of espionage).

In the frame of these two words, described there are two important rules of etiquette which govern *Du'a'* and *Dhikr*. First of all, in order that *Du'a'* be answered, it is necessary that one appears before Allah Ta'ala as weak, helpless and simply unable to hold on his own, modest

and humble, and submits to Him with a total negation of what is supposed to be pride, dignity, honour, ego, or self-view - and then makes *Du'ā'*. *Du'ā'* is a thing of the soul which requires that its words match the feebleness and humbleness of the maker of *Du'ā'*, that the manner of saying it remains a mirror of modesty, and that this overall humility should ooze forth from the very physical approach to this making of *Du'ā'*. Given this anatomy and profile of *Du'ā'*, the common practice of making *Du'ā'* these days cannot really be called the making of *Du'ā'*. It would, rather, be the reading of it. What happens most of the time is that we do not know what we are saying and it has become a routine as we notice in common Masajid. Imāms would usually say, rather read, some words of *Du'ā'* in the Arabic language which they have memorized and do this at the end of Ṣalāh. Most of the time, in some areas, the Imāms themselves do not know the meaning and sense of what they say - and even if they do know it, at least the less-knowing participants of the congregation are virtually unaware of what is being said. They would almost mechanically go on saying 'Āmīn, 'Āmīn' after the words read by the Imām without having any clue as to what was being said there. The outcome of all this stage demonstration is the vocalization of some words. *Du'ā'* has a reality of its own which is just not there. Then, this is an entirely different matter that Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite mercy, may accept these very lifeless words and give them the effect of answered prayers. But, it is necessary that everyone understands that *Du'ā'* is not 'read.' It is 'asked.' Therefore, it is crucial that one asks as one should, properly, as due.

Then, there is another aspect of *Du'ā'*. If a person does know the meanings of the words of his *Du'ā'* - and even understands what he is saying - still, if it is not accompanied by proper approach, manner and physical bearing, the *Du'ā'* stands reduced to a bland claim to which no created servant of Allah is entitled.

So, given in the first word was the spirit of *Du'ā'* which requires that one shows his humility and prays to Allah for what he needs. Then, in the second word, the instruction given is that the asking in *Du'ā'* for what one needs should be done secretly and in a lowered voice which is superior in merit and more likely to be answered. The reason is that making *Du'ā'* in a raised voice is not free of three possible draw-

backs. Firstly, it is difficult to maintain modesty and humility in doing so. Secondly, there is the danger of hypocricy and desire for recognition creeping in through this mode. Thirdly, the manner in which this *Du'ā* is made only goes to show that the person making it almost does not know that Allah Ta'ālā is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. He knows what we show on the outside and also that which we conceal inside. He hears everything said quitely or loudly. Therefore, when the voice of the Companions reached a loud pitch during *Du'ā'* made on the occasion of the Battle of Khaybar, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: 'You are not calling someone deaf or absent that you say it in such a loud voice. Instead, your addressee is someone Hearing, Near, that is, Allah Ta'ālā (so, to raise your voice is redundant). Allah *Jalla Sha'nuhu* has Himself mentioned the *Du'ā'* of a righteous person in these words: إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ نِدَاءً خَفِيًّا (When he called his Rabb calling in a lowered voice - 19:3).' This tells us that the state of *Du'ā'* liked by Allah Ta'ālā is that it be asked of Him in a lowered and subdued voice.

Sayyidnā Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says: There is a difference of seventy degrees in making *Du'ā'* openly and loudly when matched by the one made in a lowered voice. It was the habit of early righteous elders that they would exert to their maximum in Dhikr and Du'a which kept them busy most of the time, but their voice was not heard by anyone. In fact, their supplications would remain between them and their Rabb. Many of them would memorize the whole Qur'ān and keep engaged in reciting it, but others would not know about it. Then, there would be others engaged in their pursuit of advanced religious knowledge, but they would never go about telling others that they were doing so. There would be many others who would return from their homes after having long sessions of Ṣalāh but no one would come to know anything about that. He also said that he had seen such blessed people who would never perform 'Ibadāt, which they could do in private, out in the open where people could see them - and their voices during *Du'ā'* would be very low. (Ibn Kathīr, Maẓharī)

Ibn Jurayj has said that raising voices in *Du'ā'* and making it noisy is Makrūh (reprehensible). In his Aḥkām al-Qur'ān, Imām Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ has said: This verse tells us that making *Du'ā'* in a lowered voice is more merit-worthy than making it in a raised voice. It has

been reported likewise from Ḥaḍrat Ḥasan Baṣrī and Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه. This verse also tells us that the 'Āmīn' said at the end of Sūrah al-Fātiḥah should also be said in a lowered voice, which is more merit-worthy, because 'Āmīn' (Amen : so be it) is also a *Du'ā'*.

May Allah Ta'ālā guide Imāms of Masājid in our time who seem to have forgotten this teaching of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and the instructions of early righteous elders in this matter. After every Ṣalāh, what follows as *Du'ā'* has become an artificial procedure. Some words are read out loudly which, besides being contrary to the etiquette and rules of *Du'ā'*, become the source of disturbing the Ṣalāh of those who joined the congregation after it had started and were busy completing the missed part after the Imām had finished. The overwhelming influence of custom has made them incapable of noticing its drawbacks. On a particular occasion where the purpose is to have a whole group make a particular *Du'ā'*, one person may say the words of *Du'ā'* in a reasonably audible voice and others say 'Āmīn' after it, then, it does not matter. However, the condition is that this activity does not become the source of disturbance in the Ṣalāh and 'Ibādah of others - and that this does not become a matter of habit and custom whereby common people start believing in it as the standard method of making *Du'ā'*, as happening so commonly these days.

What has been said above concerned the making of *Du'ā'* for one's needs. If *Du'ā'* is taken in the sense of Dhikr (remembrance) and 'Ibādah (worship) at his place, then, according to the established position of early 'Ulamā, low-voiced Dhikr is more merit-worthy than loud Dhikr. As for the practice of Shaykhs in the Chistiah Order who recommend loud Dhikr for beginners, they do so in view of the spiritual condition of the seeker, as a measure of treatment, so that by voicing it any lack of alertness would go away and the heart would learn to become attuned to the Dhikr of Allah - otherwise, raising the voice in Dhikr, as such, is not desirable even with them, though it is permissible, and its justification stands proved from Ḥadīth as well, of course, subject to the condition that, in it, there be no hypocricy or the desire to show off (*riyā'*).

Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, Ibn Ḥibbān, Al-Baihaqī and others have reported from a narration by Sayyidnā Sa'd ibn Abī Waqqās رضى الله عنه

that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

خَيْرُ الذِّكْرِ الْخَفِيُّ وَخَيْرُ الرِّزْقِ مَا يَكْفِي

'The best Dhikr is hidden and the best sustenance is what becomes sufficient.'

However, under particular conditions and timings, a voiced Dhikr is actually more desirable and merit-worthy. Details of these timings and conditions have been explained by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم through his word and deed, for example, calling Adhān and Iqāmah with a raised voice, reciting the Qur'ān during the voiced prayers with a raised voice, saying the Takbīrs of Ṣalāh, the Takbīrs of Tashrīq, the Talbiyah in Ḥajj etc., with a raised voice. Therefore, Muslim jurists, may Allah have mercy on them all, have reached the decision that in particular conditions and places where the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has, by word or deed, taught us to raise the voice, voices must be raised. Under conditions and situations other than these, voiceless Dhikr is most preferable and beneficial.

At the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ (Surely, He does not like those who cross the limits). The word: المعتدين (*al-mu'tadīn*) is a derivation from *I'tidā'* which means to cross the limits. The sense is that Allah Ta'ālā does not like those who cross the limits, exactly as given in the translation. This crossing of limits, whether in *Du'ā'* or some other activity, has the same outcome - that Allah Ta'ālā does not like that. In fact, if looked at closely, the religion of Islām is the very name of observing limits and restrictions and electing to submit and obey. Take the example of Ṣalāh, Ṣawm, Ḥajj, Zakāh and all dealings and transactions, when limits set by the Sharī'ah of Islam are crossed in them, they do not remain acts of worship anymore - instead, they become sin.

Crossing the limits in *Du'ā'* may take several forms. Firstly, that literal formalities, such as rhyming and other stylistic devices, are employed in *Du'ā'* which may spoil its essential ingredients of humility and submission. Secondly, that unnecessary restrictions are introduced in *Du'ā* - as it appears in Ḥadīth that Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn Mughaffal رضى الله عنه saw that his son was making *Du'ā'* in the following words: 'O Allah, I seek from You the palace in Paradise which is white

in colour and located on the right hand side.' He stopped him and said: 'Making such restrictions in *Du'a* is crossing the limit, which has been prohibited in the Qur'an and Hadith.' (Mazhari from a narration of Ibn Majah and others)

The third form of crossing the limits is that someone makes a *Du'a'* wishing ill of Muslims in general, or asks from Allah something which is harmful for them. Similarly, it is also a form of crossing the limits - as mentioned here - that *Du'a'* be made in a raised voice without the need to do so. (Tafsir Mazhari, Ahkam al-Qur'an)

In the second verse (56), it was said: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order). Two antonyms have appeared here: صَلَاح (*salah*) and: فَسَاد (*fasad*). 'Salah' means the state of being good, correct, right, proper or set in order as in the translation. Then, *Fasad* refers to the state of evil, corruption, mischief, disorder. Imam Raghib al-Isfahani has said in his Mufradat al-Qur'an that *Fasad* refers to something going beyond the limits of moderation, whether this crossing over is insignificant or enormous, and the measure of an increase or decrease in every *Fasad* depends on this crossing of the limits of moderation. The farther the limits are crossed, *Fasad* will increase. *Fasad* means to make things bad and *Islah* means to correct, reform or put into order. Therefore, the verse: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا means: 'do not make things bad on the earth after that Allah has made it good and proper.'

Imam Raghib has also said: There are several forms in which Allah Ta'ala makes something right, correct and proper. Firstly, He began by creating them right, correct and proper, as in: وَأَصْلَحَ بَالَهُمْ (He will improve their condition - 47:2). Secondly, removed was the corruption that had entered into something, as in: يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ (That He may make your deeds good and right - 33:71). Thirdly, that a command is given to put things in order. This verse carries a command of abstention from mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. Here, the ordering of the earth may be taken in two senses. Firstly, the outward propriety that it was made arable and capable of growing trees with rains made to come from clouds resulting in flowers and fruits as gifts from plants and trees - and that the earth was made the source of life support for human beings and animals.

The second sense is that Allah Ta'ālā set things right on the earth inwardly and spiritually - by sending His messengers and Books and instructions and purifying it from Kufr and Shirk and error. It is quite possible that the verse means both inward and outward order in a total way. Thus, the verse would now mean that Allah Ta'ālā has put the earth in proper order both physically and spiritually and now you should not create disorder or engineer evil in there through your acts of sin and disobedience.

What is Order or Disorder on the Earth and What have Sins of People to do with it?

The way there are two aspects of order (Iṣlāḥ), the outward and the inward, or the physical and the spiritual, in the same way, there are two aspects of disorder (Fasād) also. As for the outward or physical order of the earth is concerned, that it be right and proper, it will be realized that Allah Ta'ālā has made it to be a mass or body which is neither liquid as water making it difficult to settle down upon it, nor is it hard as rock or iron which could not be dug up. It has been created to be in a middle state so that human beings could make it soft and smooth lending itself to being farmed and become capable of growing plants and trees and flowers and fruits. Then, they could also dig it up to sink wells and make moats and canals, lay strong foundations for houses to live; and then, right in and out of the earth, He created things and circumstances which would help habitate the earth, make vegetation, trees, flowers and fruits grow in it; and then, from the outside, He created wind, light, heat and chill, and made water rain through clouds over it so that trees could grow. And brought in service were stars and planets from where warm and cold rays were cast on them which filled flowers and fruits with colour and juice. Human beings were endowed with intelligence through which they dug up raw materials from the earth, like iron, copper, wood and so many other metals and rocks which they harnessed into a new world full of industries and artifices. This is the outward ordering of the earth which was brought into effect by the perfect power of Allah Ta'ālā.

As for the inward and spiritual ordering of life is concerned, it depends on the remembrance of Allah (*Dhikr*), relationship with Allah (*Ta'alluq ma' Allah*) and on obedience to Him (*Iṭā'ah*). For this, to be-

gin with, Allah Ta'ālā has already placed in the heart of every human being a basic substance and urge to remember and to obey Him: فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوٰهَا (Then, He inspired it [that is, inspired the soul or heart instinctively] as to its wrong and as to its right -91:8). So, all around human beings not a particle remains in which Allah Ta'ālā has not placed wonders of His perfect power and His astounding creativity, seeing which, even a person of average understanding would be moved to say: فَتَبٰرَكَ اللّٰهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ (So blessed be Allah, the Best to create! - 23:14). Other than these manifestations, He sent His messengers, revealed His Books through which the essential linkage between the Creator and the created was fully established.

Thus, the command given is that now that the earth has been placed in proper order, outwardly and inwardly, let it not go bad through human misdeeds.

As pointed out earlier, like Iṣlāḥ or order having two aspects, Fasād or disorder also has two aspects, the outward and the inward. This saying of Allah Ta'ālā forbids both.

Though the recurring insistence of the Qur'ān and the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم is on spiritual order as a cardinal duty which, in effect, aims to stop any emergence of spiritual disorder as a counter possibility. But, in the world we live in, the linkage between the order and disorder of the physical and spiritual is such that any disorder in one becomes the source of disorder in the other. Therefore, when the Sharī'ah of the Qur'ān has blocked the doors of spiritual disorder, it has also prohibited physical disorder. Theft, robbery, murder and all ways of immodesty and indecency create all sorts of physical and spiritual disorder in the world. So, stern restrictions were placed and punishments proposed particularly against such evil acts while common sins and crimes were also prohibited - because, every sin becomes the source of physical disorder at some time, and that of spiritual disorder at some other. And, if looked at closely, every outward disorder becomes the cause of inward disorder, and conversely, every inward disorder becomes the source of outward disorder.

That outward or physical disorder becomes the inevitable source of inward or spiritual disorder is obvious, for it is the contravention of the command to obey Divine injunctions - in fact, disobedience to Allah

Ta'ālā is another name for spiritual disorder. As for the chemistry of spiritual disorder and how it transforms itself as the cause of physical disorder, this can be discerned only through a little serious reflection. The reason is that this whole world and everything big and small in it was created by the Master of the domain of creation to wherever it extends, and it is but subservient to His command. So far as human beings remain obedient to Allah, everything stands harnessed into their service as due and proper. But, when human beings start disobeying Allah Ta'ālā, everything in the world starts disobeying human beings from behind a curtain through which they cannot see with their mortal eyes. But, it is by deliberation into the effects, properties, results and outcomes of these things that one does find the relevant proof of their becoming hostile very conclusively.

If taken with a surface view, human beings keep using all these things normally. When water goes down the throat, it does not refuse to quench thirst; food does not stop removing hunger and dress and home do not disappoint them by refusing to provide defence against heat and chill.

But, when looked at in terms of the ultimate outcome, it would appear that none of these things is fulfilling its assigned job - because, the real function and use of all these things is that they should provide peace and comfort, that anxieties are removed and sicknesses are cured.

Now if you look at conditions prevailing in our world, you will realize that, despite the proliferation of things of comfort and the means and materials of curing diseases much beyond any expectations, the majority of human beings is victimized by extreme distresses and diseases. Never-known diseases and ever-new calamities seem to be the order of the day. No one, not even the highest among human beings, is contended and in peace in his or her station of life. In fact, the more these functional facilities and fruits of skill keep increasing in their output, the more increasing becomes the parallel manifestation of diseases, anxieties, disasters and hardships - very much like the saying in Urdu which means: 'The more they treat you, the more sick they make you.'

If modern man bewitched by the magic of energy and its material

gains were to rise a little above his infatuation with things and technology, he will realize that all our efforts to invent and construct things and to lay the foundations of a society on top of them have flatly failed to give us peace and comfort which was our real purpose. There is no reason for this but that inward disorder we have been talking about which means that we have started disobeying our Rabb, our Creator and Master, so His creation has started disobeying us on the inward front - that it refuses to provide real peace and comfort for us, despite all our efforts at break-neck speed. To this the famous Maulānā Rūmī pointed out by saying that the elements of dust, air, water and fire, though they appear inert and *sans* sense yet, in reality, they too do possess a degree of intelligence which makes them work under the command of their Master.

To sum up, it can be said that sin, heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā, and disobedience to Him do not only create spiritual disorder, but they also lead to the inevitable physical disorder. When the same Maulānā Rūmī says that the cloud does not come to rain when you stop paying Zakāh while from Zinā (adultery) results an epidemic affecting all directions. This is no poetic imagination. This is a reality authentically supported by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. But, what becomes visible in this world is just a light sample of the ultimate punishment in the form of diseases, epidemics, storms, hurricanes and floods.

Therefore, included in the sense of the verse: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا (And do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order) are crimes and sins which cause disorder in the world physically and outwardly - and also included there are sin, disobedience, and heedlessness towards Allah Ta'ālā. Therefore, immediately after in this verse, it was said: وَادْعُوْهُ خَوْفًا وَّطَمَعًا (And supplicate to Him in fear and hope). It means that it should be done in a way that, on the one hand, one has the fear of the *Du'ā'* remaining unanswered, while on the other hand, one has full hope tied to His mercy. These very twin attitudes of fear and hope are the two wings of the human soul on its journey with truth and fortitude. On these it flies high and through these it reaches superior ranks destined for it.

Then, as the text obviously shows, the degree of fear and hope should be equal. Some 'Ulama have said that it is appropriate to keep

fear dominate during life with health, so that there be no shortcoming in being obedient. And when comes the time to die, it is better to let hope dominate, because the strength to do what should have been done is not there anymore and there is nothing left to do except hope for the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

And some researchers among scholars have said that the purpose is to hold on to the straight path of religion and be constant in obedience to Allah Ta'ālā. Then, the temperaments and tastes of human beings differ. Some achieve this station of fortitude and constancy in obedience by keeping fear as the dominant factor. Others achieve these by keeping love and hope as dominating factors. So, whoever finds help to achieve this purpose through either of these two options, should try to achieve it through that option.

To summarize the comments made about *Du'ā'*, it can be said that the first verse tells us about two rules of etiquette relating to *Du'ā'*: (1) That it be with humility and submission, and (2) that it be secret and low-voiced. These two qualities belong to the outward human physique - because "*taḍarru'*" suggests that one should, while making *Du'ā'*, assume the looks and manners of someone weak, helpless and needy and should never allow it to be proud, arrogant or seemingly need-free. Then, that it be secret also relates to one's speech through the mouth and tongue.

As for the spiritual etiquette of *Du'ā'* as given in this verse, there are two rules to be followed. These relate to the human heart. They require that the person making the *Du'ā'* should feel the danger in his heart that his *Du'ā'* may, perhaps, remain unanswered while, at the same time, he should also hope that his *Du'ā'* may be answered - because becoming careless about one's errors and sins is contrary to 'Īmān (faith) and losing hope in the infinite mercy of Allah Ta'ālā is Kufr (disbelief). Both are impermissible extremes. The hope that a prayer will be answered can be entertained only when one keeps in between the two states of fear and hope.

Then, at the end of the verse, it was said: إِنَّ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِّنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ (Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to the good in deeds). The hint given here is that, though there should be the two states of fear and hope present while making a *Du'ā'*, but, out of the two states, the option of

hope is the weightier option - because the prayer is being made to the Lord of all the worlds the extent of Whose mercy cannot be conceived, and in whose generosity and favour there is no shortage or reluctance. He can answer the *Du'ā'* of the worst of offenders, even the *Du'ā'* of the Satan himself. Of course, should there be a danger of *Du'ā'* remaining unanswered, that could only be possible on account of one's own misdeeds or due to the hanging curse of sins - because being good in deeds is necessary to become close to the mercy of Allah Ta'ālā.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم has said that some people travel long distances, look like faqirs and raise their hands for *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, but ḥarām is their food and ḥarām is their drink and ḥarām is their dress. So, how can a *Du'ā'* made by such a person be answered? (Muslim, Tirmidhī from Sayyidnā Abī Hurairah)

According to another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: The prayer of a servant of Allah keeps finding acceptance until such time that he does not pray for some sin or for the severence of some relationship - and that he does not make haste. The noble Companion asked about the meaning of 'making haste.' He said: It means that one may think - here I am making a *Du'ā'* for all this time and it has not been answered yet - until he becomes disappointed and stops making *Du'ā'*. (Muslim, Tirmidhī)

According to yet another Ḥadīth, the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Whenever you make *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā, do it in a state when you have no doubt about its being answered.

It means that one should keep his or her sight on the most extensive mercy of Allah Ta'ālā and let the heart believe that the prayer being made shall be answered. This is not contrary to the danger one may feel that his or her sins may become an impediment in the acceptance of one's *Du'ā'*. وصلى الله تعالى على نبينا وسلم

Verses 57 - 58

وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًاۢ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۭ حَتّٰٓى اِذَآ
اَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا سُقْنٰهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ فَاَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاۗءَ فَاَخْرَجْنَا
بِهٖ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرٰتِ ۭ كَذٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ

﴿٥٧﴾ وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهُ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِ وَالَّذِي خَبُثَ لَا
يَخْرُجُ إِلَّا نَكِدًا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾

And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings, until when they lift up the heavy clouds, We drive them to a dead land, then there We pour down the water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits. This is how We bring forth all the dead, so that you may observe advice. [57]

As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad. Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude. [58]

Commentary

In previous verses, Allah Ta'ālā has mentioned some of His major and particular blessings. By pointing out to the creation of the heavens and the earth, the day and night, and the sun, moon and stars and how they serve human beings, the lesson driven home is that there is no power other than the sacred Being of Allah Ta'ālā to take care of our needs and comforts, then, it becomes necessary that we should pray to none but Him for everything we need and take this turning to Him as the key of our success.

Also mentioned in the first of the present verses are some other important blessings of this nature on which depends the existence and survival of human beings and the entire creation of the earth, for example, the rains and the trees, and farmlands and its produce. The difference is that the previous verses mentioned blessings relating to the upper domain while the present ones belong to the lower. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Something special has been identified in the second verse where it is said that these great Divine blessings are, though common to all parts of the earth - as rains, when they come, fall on rivers and mountains and on good and bad lands alike - but, what grows from the earth grows only from the land which has the quality to make it grow. Rocky and sandy lands do not derive benefit from these rains.

The conclusion drawn from the first verse is that the sacred Being which enables dead land to live again should have no problems in making human beings who once lived, then died, come to life once again. The conclusion so drawn is very clear. Then, there is another conclusion drawn from the second verse. It tells us that the guidance coming from Allah Ta'ala, the revealed Books, the blessed prophets, and the teachings and training undertaken by their deputies, the *'Ulama'* and *Mashaikh* are like the rains, common to every human being. But, the way every land does not derive benefit from the mercy of rains, very similarly, the benefit of this spiritual rain is derived by those who have the ability to absorb it. As for those whose hearts are like rocky and sandy land not having the ability to absorb it and make growth possible, they would keep sticking to their ways of error despite clear guidance and signs and scriptures.

The conclusion thus drawn comes from the last sentence of the second verse which says: كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّشْكُرُوْنَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude). The sense is that the statement made was, though for everyone, yet, in the ultimate consequence, it proved beneficial only for those who had the capacity for it and realized its worth and value. Thus, the two verses quoted here cover the subject of human origin and return. Now, we can go to a fuller explanation of these two verses. The first verse begins by saying: وَهُوَ الَّذِىْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيٰحَ بُشْرًاۢ بَيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمَتِهٖ (And He is the One who sends the winds carrying good news before His blessings). Here, the word: رِيح (*ar-riyah*) is the plural form of *rih* which means the wind, and *'bushran'* means good news or glad tidings, and *'rahmat'* refers to the rain of mercy, that is, it is Allah Ta'ala Himself who sends the winds to announce the good news of the coming rain of mercy.

The sense of the verse is that it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ala that He sends cool winds before the actual coming of rains which not only please people, but also, in a way, foretell that rains are coming much before they actually do. Therefore, these winds are a combination of two blessings. They themselves are beneficial for human beings and bracing for the creation in general. Then, they announce the rains before its coming. Human beings are a highly sensitive model of creation. Rains may stop them from doing what they

need to do. If they could naturally find out about the coming rains ahead of time, they would be able to manage things for themselves. In addition to that, one's own person and belongings are not, at all times, defended against rains. By having early indications of rains, most would be able to take protective cover for themselves and their belongings.

Then, it was said: حَتّٰىٓ اِذَآ اَقَلَّتْ سَحَابًا ثِقَالًا (until when they lift up the heavy clouds). The word: سَحَاب (*sahāb*) means the cloud and: ثِقَال (*thiqāl*) is the plural of *thaqīl* which means heavy, that is, when the winds lift up the heavy clouds. Heavy clouds refer to clouds laden with water. They would, as if, travel riding on the shoulders of the wind, and thus, this water weighing thousands of tons comfortably rides high on the wings of the wind. How wonderful is the Divine design which uses no machines nor lets human beings slave for it. It is as simple as it can be - when Allah Ta'ālā wills, vapours from the waters start rising upwards, turn into clouds and what you have is a sky-filling plane carrying a cargo of hundreds and thousands of gallons of water in its holds flying on the cushion of winds towards higher altitudes!

After that, it was said: سُقْنٰهُ لِبَلَدٍ مَّيِّتٍ (We drive them to a dead land). The word: سَوْق (*sauq*) means to drive, herd or urge on towards a desired destination, and '*balad*' means a town or habitation, and '*mayyit*' means dead.

The verse, thus, means: 'When the winds lifted the heavy clouds up, We drove the clouds to a dead town.' Dead town refers to the habitation rendered desolate because of an scarcity of water. That a town or habitation has been named here in place of a common open land is appropriate in view of the real purpose of sending the rain because it is designed to feed the thirsty land and enable it to produce what human beings need. The place to do so would be a habitated area, not an inhabitated forest primarily where the growth of vegetation is less likely to serve the initial purpose.

Upto this point, the description in the quoted verses proves the following: (1) That rains come through clouds, as commonly observed. This tells us that verses in which raining from the sky has been mentioned, there too, the word: سَمَآء (*samā'*) refers to clouds. Then, not improbable is the likelihood that clouds originate directly from the skies -

as opposed to monsoons originating from the waters - and bring rains. (2) That clouds go in a particular direction and over a particular land area is something related directly to Divine command. It is He who gives the command for rains to fall when He wills, where He wills and as much as He wills. The clouds implement the Divine command.

It is something observed everywhere. There are occasions when a town or habitation would have heavy over-head clouds, and they would very much be in need of rains, but the clouds would not let them have even a drop of water. Instead, it would go to a town or habitation for which there is a quota of water as Divinely determined, and it would be only there that it would rain. No one has the ability or the daring to acquire water from these clouds at any other place, other than the town or habitation earmarked to have it.

Weather scientists have determined rules about the movement of monsoons based on which they can tell the course of a monsoon rising from the waters of the sea and identify where and how much it would rain. There are meteorological bureaus set up for this purpose in many countries. But, experience shows that news released by these departments frequently turn out to be contrary to fact. When what is contrary is the Divine command itself, their rules become ineffective. Winds and rain-laden clouds turn towards somewhere else, contrary to foretold news, and weather experts cannot do much about it.

In addition to that, any other rules and regulations proposed by meteorologists, they too are not contrary to the proposition that the movement of clouds obeys the Divine command - because it is the customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā that, in all affairs of this world, the Divine command manifests itself from behind the curtains of physical causes. Human beings pick up these very causes and formulate some rule or regulation based on them. Otherwise, reality lies elsewhere.

After that, it was said: فَأَنْزَلْنَا بِهِ الْمَاءَ فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ (We pour down water, then, with it We bring forth of all the fruits).

And then, at the end of the verse, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ نُخْرِجُ الْمَوْتٰى لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُوْنَ (This is how We bring forth all the dead [on the day of Qiyāmah], so that you may observe advice). Thus, the sense of the verse is: 'The way We have given new life to the dead land and have brought out from it

trees, flowers and fruits, similarly, on the day of Qiyāmah, We shall have the dead rise once again after their having been dead. And these examples have been set forth so that you would have the opportunity to reflect and deliberate.

According to a narration of Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah رضی اللہ عنہ, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said:' صُوْر (*Ṣūr* : Horn) will be blown twice on the day of Qiyāmah. On the first *Ṣūr*, the whole world will perish. Nothing will remain alive. On the second *Ṣūr*, a new world will come into being. The dead will become alive.' The Ḥadīth also mentions 'an interval of forty years between the two blowings of the *Ṣūr* and rains would continue to fall throughout these forty years. During this period, the body parts of every dead human being and animal will become assembled into them giving everyone a complete skeleton. Then, at the time of the blowing of the second *Ṣūr*, *Rūḥ* (soul) will enter these corpses. They will rise alive.' A major portion of this narration can be seen in Al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Some portions have been taken from Kitāb al-Ba'th of Ibn Abī Dāwūd.

Stated in the second verse (58) is: وَالْبَلَدُ الطَّيِّبُ يَخْرُجُ نَبَاتُهٗ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهٖ وَالَّذِیْ خَبُثَ لَا يَخْرُجُ اِلَّا نَكِدًا (As for the good land, its vegetation comes out with the permission of its Lord. And that which is bad does not grow except what is bad). The word: نَكِدًا (*nakid*) refers to something useless and scanty both. The sense of the verse is that the mercy of rain, when it comes, is common to every town and land, but lands are of two kinds in terms of their yield and outcome. First, there is good land which helps growth. From it come flowers and fruits and many other benefits. Then, there is the hard, barren or saline land which lacks the ability to grow plants. First of all, not much grows on such a land, and if something does grow there, its quantity remains insignificant, and even this quantity is useless and bad.

At the end of the verse, it was said: كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَّشْكُرُوْنَ (Thus We alternate the verses for a people who pay gratitude).

The hint given here is: Though the open blessing of Allah's guidance and His clear '*Āyāt* is open and common to all human beings very much like the general mercy of rain, but every land does not derive benefit from the rain and, similarly, every human being does not derive benefit from Divine guidance. Rather, the benefit is derived by

only those who are grateful for what they receive and recognize its real worth and value.

Verses 59 - 64

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَالَكُمْ
مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ ؕ اِنِّىْۤ اَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٥٩﴾
قَالَ الْمَلَاُ مِنْ قَوْمِهٖۤ اِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٦٠﴾ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ
لَيْسَ بِىْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّىْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ اُبَلِّغُكُمْ
رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّىْ وَاَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَاَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَالَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾
اَوَعَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ
لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوْا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ
وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ فِى الْفُلْكِ وَاَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ؕ اِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَمِيْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾

Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people. Then he said, "O my people, worship Allah. For you there is no god other than Him. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day." [59]

The chiefs of his people said, "Indeed we see you in an obvious error." [60] **He said, "O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds.** [61] **I convey to you the messages of my Lord and wish you betterment, and I know from Allah what you do not know."** [62] **Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah, and that you may be blessed with mercy?"** [63]

Then, they belied him, so, We saved him, and those with him in the Ark, and drowned those who belied Our signs. Certainly, they were a blind people. [64]

Commentary

Described from the beginning of Sūrah al-A'rāf upto this point were

the subjects of *Tauḥīd, Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*, the basic principles of Islam. These were proved and affirmed in different ways, people were pursuaded to follow them and warned against taking opposing stands. Then, as a corollary, the guiles of Satan which make people go astray were mentioned. Now, from the eighth Rukū' (section) to almost the end of the Sūrah, there is a description of some prophets, may peace be upon them, and of their communities. The subject dealt with here consists of the commonly pursued principles of *Tauḥīd*, *Risālah* and *'Ākhirah*. They all invited their respective communities towards these universal principles, gave them the good news of rewards for those who believed in them, and warned them of punishments for refusing to believe and the sad end they would have for doing so. This description takes about fourteen sections, where hundreds of basic and subsidiary rulings appear as a corollary. Thus, the present communities were given an opportunity to learn a lesson from the sad end of past communities - and, for the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم, this became a source of comfort that this was how things have been with all other prophets.

The verses appearing above take a whole Rukū' of Sūrah al-A'rāf. It describes the mission of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام and the state of the community to which he was sent.

Though, in the chain of prophets, the first prophet is Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام, but his was not the time for confrontation against disbelief and error. In the religious code given to him, most of the injunctions were related to habitation of the land and management of human needs. Disbelief and disbelievers just did not exist. The confrontation against Kufr (disbelief) and Shirk (associating partners in the Divinity of Allah) began with Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام. He is, in terms of the mission of prophethood and a code of religious laws, the first *rasūl* of Allah. In addition to that, people who survived after the drowning of the whole world during the great flood or deluge, were Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام and those with him in the Ark. It was through him that the new world was populated. Therefore, he is also referred to as the junior Adam. This is the reason why he appears first in this story of prophets which has a description of his nine hundred and fifty year long prophetic struggle in contrast to the crooked ways of the majority in his community, as a result of which, all except a few believers were

drowned. Details follow.

The first verse begins with the words: لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ (Surely We sent Nūḥ to his people).

Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام is in the eighth generation of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه appearing in Mustadrak of Ḥākim, there is an interval of ten Qarn between Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام and Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام. The same has been reported by Ṭabarānī as based on a Ḥadīth of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم narrated by Sayyidnā Abū Dharr رضی الله عنه (Tafsīr Maẓharī) A Qarn generally means one hundred years. Therefore, the interval of time between these two comes to be one thousand years according to this narration. Ibn Jarīr has reported that Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام was born eight hundred and twenty six years after the death of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام, and according to a clear statement of the Qur'ān, he reached an age of nine hundred and fifty years - and according to a Ḥadīth, the age of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام is nine hundred and sixty years. Thus, the time from the birth of Sayyidnā Ādam علیه السلام to the death of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام comes to be a total of two thousand eight hundred and fifty six years. (Maẓharī) In some narrations, the real name of Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام appears as Shākir while in some others it has been given as Sakan, and 'Abd al-Ghaffār, in still others.

Whether his time is before or after Sayyidnā Idrīs علیه السلام - Enoch - has been debated. The majority of the Ṣaḥābah have said that Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام has appeared before Sayyidnā Idrīs علیه السلام (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Based on a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی الله عنه reports Mustadrak of Ḥākim that the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم said: Nūḥ علیه السلام was invested with prophethood at the age of forty years and, after the Flood, he lived for sixty years.

The verse of the Qur'ān: لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ (Surely, We sent Nūḥ to his people) proves that Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام was sent as a prophet only to his people. It was not common to the whole world. His people lived in Iraq. They were outwardly civilized but were involved in Shirk. The call given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ علیه السلام to his people was: يَٰقَوْمِ ٱعْبُدُوا ٱللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُۥٓ إِنِّىٓ أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ (O my people, worship Allah.

For you there is no god other than Him. I fear for you the punishment of a great Day). In the first sentence, the invitation given is to worship Allah Ta'ālā, which is the essence of the principle. In the second sentence, people have been pursuaded to shun Shirk and Kufr, something which had spread out like some epidemic among these people. In the third sentence, the purpose is to warn people against the danger of that great punishment which they would have to face in the event they were to do otherwise. This 'great punishment' could mean the punishment of the Hereafter, and the punishment of the Flood in the present world too. (Tafsīr Kabīr)

In reply, his people said: إِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ("Indeed we see you in an obvious error"). The word: مَلَأ (*malā*) is used for chiefs, headmen and empowered elders of a community or group. The sense of what his people said in response to his call was to tell him that he was actually trying to wean them away from their ancestral faith and that all these ideas of rising on some last day and being rewarded or punished were nothing but superstition.

These were harsh words. But, the reply given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام carries an eloquent diction fit for a prophet. Here, he is leaving a trail for all carriers of *da'wah*, preachers and reformers, as a signpost of education and guidance. Here, he is not responding on the same wave length, not anger against anger, but trying to remove their doubts in the simplest possible words: قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَيْسَ بِىْ ضَلٰلَةٌ وَّلٰكِنِّىْ رَسُوْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّىْ وَاَنْصَحُ لَكُمْ وَاَعْلَمُ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ. (He said, "O my people, there is no error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. I convey to you the messages of my Lord and wish your betterment, and I know from Allah what you do not know). In other words, what Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام is telling his people was that 'their accusation that he has gone astray was not true. However, the fact remained that he was not bound by their ancestral customs rooted in ignorance like them. Instead of that, he was sent as a messenger from the Lord of all the worlds. Whatever he was telling them was under the guidance of his Lord. His sole mission was to convey the message of Allah Ta'ālā to them which was in their interest and for their good. This was not for any benefit of Allah Ta'ālā nor did it serve any personal interest of his own.' The expression: 'Lord of all the worlds' in this statement strikes

decisively against believing in Shirk by associating others with the pristine Divinity of Allah Ta'ālā. Once the spirit of this assertion is understood, no god or goddess of any denomination can stand valid as objects of worship. After that, he said that the doubts they had about the punishment of the Last Day were because of their lack of awareness - and, as for him, he was blessed with certitude in this matter by Allah Ta'ālā.

After that comes the reply to the other doubt expressed by them. This has been stated clearly in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn: مَا هٰذَآ اِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُرِيْدُ اَنْ يَّتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَوْ شَآءَ اللّٰهُ لَاَنْزَلَ مَلٰٓئِكَةً, that is, the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام came up with another doubt about the call given by him. They thought that he was only human, a man like them who ate, drank, slept and woke as they did. How could they take him as their leader? Had Allah wanted to send a message for them, he should have sent angels with it whose distinction and greatness would have impressed them. Now, what they saw here was no more than that there was someone from among their own race and community who wished to establish his superiority over them - 23:24.

Here, the answer given was: اَوَعَجِبْتُمْ اَنْ جَآءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ عَلٰى رَجُلٍ مِّنْكُمْ لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوْا وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ (Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah, and that you may be blessed with mercy?) [that is, his warning may lead you to stop opposing him as a result of which you may be blessed with mercy]

The substance of the argument is that the making of a human being a messenger of Allah is not a matter of surprise. First of all, Allah Ta'ālā is the Absolute Master. Bestowing on someone the status of a prophet or messenger is His exclusive domain. It is He who does it at His will. No one is in a position to dare have it otherwise. In addition to that, a little deliberation will make it clear that the purpose of sending a prophet or messenger to guide human beings can only be achieved through a human being. This is a mission angels cannot perform.

The reason is that the purpose of prophethood is to bring people round to believe in and obey Allah Ta'ālā and save them from harsh consequences of their opposition to His injunctions - and this can only

be possible when a person from their own kind presents before them a model of the desired conduct and shows before them that it is quite possible to worship Allah and obey His injunctions even with the fulfillment of inherent human needs and desires. If this call was brought forth by angels and they were to put their model before people, it is obvious that people would have found it fairly convenient to say that angels are free of human desires, they are never hungry or thirsty, they never sleep, or get tired. How could they ever become like them? But, when one of their own kind, despite having common human characteristics and desires, walks amongst them as a perfect model of obedience to Divine injunctions, they would be left with no excuse.

It was to point out in this direction that it was said: لِيُنْذِرَكُمْ وَلِتَتَّقُوْا (so that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah). In other words, it means that a person whose warning can make people have fear could only be the one who is of their kind and is an epitome of human traits like them. This is not an unusual doubt for the disbelievers of many communities who have questioned the propriety of having a human being as prophet or messenger. This is the answer given by the Qur'ān to all such doubts. It is certainly regretable that, despite so many clarifications of the Qur'ān, there are people who would dare going to the limit of denying the 'human-ness' of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم. But, the problem with the ignorant among human beings is that they would not understand this reality and would simply refuse to accept the superiority of anyone from their own kind. This is why they would nurse hatred for their contemporary *Awliyā'* (men of Allah) and *'Ulamā'* (highly trained and trustworthy religious scholars who practice what they teach) and look down upon them because of their contemporaneousness. This has always been the trademark of the ignorant.

When this paternal and well-wishing approach of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام in reply to the heart-rending words said by his addressees made no effect on these unfeeling people who turned blind to truth and kept belying it, then, Allah Ta'ālā sent down upon them the punishment of Flood. It was said: فَكَذَّبُوْهُ فَاَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَالَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ فِى الْفُلْكِ وَاَغْرَقْنَا الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا ، اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَوْمًا عَمِيْنَ (Then, they belied him [ignoring his good counsel totally], so [as a consequence], we saved him, and those with him in the Ark, and

drowned those who had belied Our signs. Certainly, they were a blind people).

The story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and the full account of the drowning of his people and the deliverance of the people in the Ark appears in Sūrah Hūd and Sūrah Nūḥ. Given at this place is its gist as appropriate to the occasion. Sayyidnā Zayd ibn Aslam رحمه الله says: When the punishment of Flood overtook the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, they were at the prime of their population and power. The lands and mountains of Iraq were becoming insufficient for their rising numbers. It should be kept in mind that it is a customary practice of Allah Ta'ālā since ever that He would keep granting respite to the disobedient. He would send His punishment over them at a time when they have reached the highest peak of their numbers, power and wealth, and become, so to say, drunk with this state of their life. (Ibn Kathīr)

As for the number of people in the Ark of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, reports differ. Ibn Kathīr, through a narration of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, reports from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضى الله عنه that there were eighty people. One of them was called Jurhum. He spoke Arabic. (Ibn Kathīr)

Some narrations have given the detail that there were forty men and forty women in the Ark. After the Flood, the place in Mosul, Iraq where they came to stay became known as Thamānūn (eighty).

To sum up, the introduction of a brief account of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام at this place aims to tell us three things: (1) That the *da'wah* of all past prophets and their basic articles of faith were one. (2) That Allah Ta'ālā supports his appointed messengers in strikingly wonderous ways when they would not have the least danger to their security even after having been surrounded by a Flood rising as high as the peaks of mountains. (3) Then, it was made absolutely clear that belying the noble prophets of Allah, may peace be upon them, amounted to inviting Divine punishment. The warning is still valid. So, let it not be forgotten that the way past communities were overtaken by punishment because of their belying of the prophets, a similar fate could overtake their modern counterparts - on this count, they could do better by not becoming heedless and fear-free.

Verses 65 - 72

وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَٰهٍ
غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا
لَنَرَاكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكَٰذِبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾ قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ
لَيْسَ بِي سَفَاهَةٌ وَلَٰكِنِّي رَسُولٌ مِّن رَّبِّ الْعَٰلَمِينَ ﴿٦٧﴾
أُبَلِّغُكُمْ رِسَٰلَٰتِ رَبِّي وَأَنَا لَكُمْ نَاصِحٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ أَوَعَجِبْتُمْ أَن
جَاءَكُمْ ذِكْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ عَلَىٰ رَجُلٍ مِّنكُمْ لِيُنذِرَكُمْ وَاذْكُرُوا
إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ
بَصْطَةً فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾ قَالُوا أَجِئْتَنَا
لِنَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَحْدَهُ وَنَذَرَ مَا كَانَ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأْتِنَا بِمَا تَعِدُنَا
إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّٰدِقِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾ قَالَ قَدْ وَقَعَ عَلَيْكُم مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ
رِجْسٌ وَغَضَبٌ أَتُجَٰدِلُونَنِي فِي أَسْمَاءٍ سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنتُمْ
وَآبَاؤُكُم مَّا نَزَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِن سُلْطَٰنٍ فَانتَظِرُوا إِنِّي مَعَكُم
مِّنَ الْمُنتَظِرِينَ ﴿٧١﴾ فَأَنجَيْنَٰهُ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ بِرَحْمَةٍ مِّنَّا وَقَطَعْنَا
دَابِرَ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَٰتِنَا وَمَا كَانُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

And to 'Ād (We sent) their brother, Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?" [65]

Said the chiefs of his people who disbelieved, "Indeed, we see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars." [66]

He said, "O my people, there is no foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. [67] **I convey to you the messages of my Lord; and for you, I am an honest adviser.** [68] **Do you wonder that an advice from your Lord has come to you through a man from among you, so that he may warn you? And remember when He made you successors after the people of**

Nūḥ and gave you increased strength in physique. So, be mindful of the bounties of Allah, so that you may be successful." [69]

They said, "Have you come to us in order that we should worship Allah alone and give up what our fathers used to worship? Now, bring us what you threaten us with, if you are one of the truthful." [70]

He said, "The punishment and the anger from your Lord have fallen upon you. Do you quarrel with me about names coined by you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority? So, wait. I am one of those waiting, with you." [71]

So, We saved him and those with him out of mercy from Us, and We eradicated those who belied Our signs. And they were not believers. [72]

Commentary

A Brief History of 'Ād and Thamūd

'Ād is the name of a person who is in the fifth generation after Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and is among the progeny of his son Sām. Then, his progeny, and his people, came to be known by the name of 'Ād. In the Holy Qur'ān, 'Ād also appears with the words: عَادًا اُلْاُولٰى ('Ād al-'ūlā: 'Ād, the First) and also: اِرَمَ ذَاتِ الْعِمَادِ (that is, of the city of Iram with lofty pillars; or tall like lofty pillars - 89:7) which tells us that the people of 'Ād are also known in association with the name of Iram, and that with 'Ād I, there is some 'Ād II as well. In this investigation, commentators and historians differ. The better known proposition is that Iram is the name of the grandfather of 'Ād. This 'Ād is among the children of 'Auṣ who was his son, and is known as 'Ād I. His second son, جَثَر (Jathw) had a son. His name was Thamūd. He is called 'Ād II. The outcome is that 'Ād and Thamūd are both two branches of Iram. One of them is called 'Ād I and the other is known as Thamūd or 'Ād II, and the word: اِرَمْ (Iram) is common to both 'Ād and Thamūd.

Some commentators have said that at the time when the punishment overtook the people of 'Ād, a deputation of theirs was on a visit to Makkah al-Mu'ẓẓamah, which remained safe from this punishment. It is known as the other 'Ād. (Bayān al-Qur'ān)

Hud عليه السلام is the name of a prophet. He is also in the fifth generation of Sayyidna Nuh عليه السلام, and is among the progeny of Sam. The geneological tree of the people of 'Ad and Sayyidna Hud عليه السلام converges on Sam in the fifth generation. Therefore, Sayyidna Hud عليه السلام is a lineal brother to 'Ad. That is why it was said: أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا (their brother Hud - 65)

The people of 'Ad had thirteen families. Their habitations were spread out from Oman to Hadramaut and Yaman. Their lands were fertile. Gardens were abundant. To live they constructed mansions and palaces. They were tall and heavily built. This is what the expression: زَادَكُمْ فِى الْخَلْقِ بَصْطَةً (gave you increased strength in physique - 69) means. Allah Ta'ala had opened the doors of His blessing upon them. But, their crooked thinking made these very blessings a curse for them. They became so intoxicated with their power and grandeur that they started boasting: مَنْ أَشَدُّ مِنَّا قُوَّةً (Who is superior to us in strength?- 41:15). How strange of them that they took no notice of their Lord and the Lord of the worlds bathed in whose blessings they all were and went on to sink themselves into the worship of idols carved out of rocks!

The Lineage of Sayyidna Hud عليه السلام and Some Glimpses of the Background

These were the people for whose guidance Allah Ta'ala sent Sayyidna Nuh عليه السلام as a prophet who was from their family. The famous authority on Arab geneology, Abu al-Barakat al-Jauni has written that the name of the son of Sayyidna Hud عليه السلام is Ya'rub ibn Qahtan who went to live in Yaman. Yamani people are his progeny. The Arabic language originated from him and it was this correspondence with 'Ya'rub' that the language was called Arabic and its speakers, the Arabs. (Al-Bahr Al-Muhit)

But, the truth of the matter is that the Arabic language was there since the time of Sayyidna Nuh عليه السلام. In his Ark, he had a companion called Jurhum. He spoke Arabic (Al-Bahr Al-Muhit) The populating of Makkah al-Mu'azzamah started from this very Jurhum. However, it is possible that the origination of the Arabic language took place in Yaman through Ya'rub ibn Qahtan and this may be what Abu al-Barakat has meant.

Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام induced the people of 'Ād to forsake idol-worship and take to pure monotheism and shun injustice and oppression and practice moderation and justice. But, these people were drunk with power and wealth. They did not listen to him. Consequently, the first punishment that visited them was that rains stopped coming for a full three years in succession. Lands became deserts. Gardens turned into dead wood. But, these people still kept sticking to *Shirk* and idol-worship. Then, came another punishment. A severe wind storm overtook them. It continued for eight days and seven nights. What remained of their gardens and mansions and palaces was levelled to the ground. Their men and animals went up into the air and zoomed back hitting the floor on their heads. Thus, the people of 'Ād were eliminated to the last man. The sense of the expression: وَقَطَعْنَا دَابِرَ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا (and we eradicated those who belied Our signs) in this verse, as determined by some commentators, is that all those people present at that time were totally destroyed. Some other commentators have said that it means that Allah Ta'ālā cut off the lineal root of the people of 'Ād for the future as well.

When the punishment for not listening to Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and insisting on Kufr and Shirk came down upon his people, he and his companions took refuge in an open area enclosed with stakes. It was strange that the stormy winds which were making palaces collapse on their columns would suddenly change pace and enter this enclosure gently. Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and his companions kept sitting peacefully where they were even during the descension of the punishment without having to face any inconvenience. It was after the destruction of the people of 'Ād that they moved to Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah where they lived until death. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

That the punishment for the people of 'Ād came in the form of a wind storm has been explicity and categorically mentioned in the Qur'ān. Then, there is the statement in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn which follows the narration of the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام: ثُمَّ اَنْشَاْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا اٰخَرِيْنَ that is, then, after them, We brought forth another generation - 23:31. It seems obvious that another generation here means the people of 'Ād. Then, after having given a view of their word and deed, it was said: فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ (an extremely harsh and horrifying sound [Aṣ-

Ṣaiḥah] took them - 23:41). Based on this statement of the Qur'ān, some commentators have said that the punishment which was set upon the people of 'Ād was that of Aṣ-Ṣaiḥah (extremely harsh and screaming sound). But, there is no contradiction here. It is possible that they both came to pass.

This was a brief account relating to the people of 'Ād and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام. Its details as given in the words of the Qur'ān follow.

(1) Said in the first verse (65) was: وَإِلَىٰ عَادٍ أَخَاهُمْ هُودًا ، قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ، أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ (And to 'Ād [We sent] their brother, Hūd. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no god other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?").

The grave punishment sent upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام much before the people of 'Ād was still alive in the minds of the people of his time. Therefore, Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام had no need to describe the severity and gravity of punishment sent upon disobedient people. He considered it quite sufficient to say: Do you not fear Allah?

(2) In the second verse (66), it was said: قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ إِنَّا لَنَرٰىكَ فِي سَفَاهَةٍ وَّإِنَّا لَنَظُنُّكَ مِنَ الْكٰذِبِينَ (Said the chiefs of his people who disbelieved, "Indeed, We see you in foolishness, and we certainly believe you to be one of the liars." This stance taken in opposition here resembles the one taken by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. The only difference is that of some words. Its reply which appears in verses 67 and 68 is nearly the same as given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام - 61-63.

(3) Once again, the objection of the people of 'Ād mentioned in the fifth verse (69) is the same as raised by the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام before them - that is, 'how can we take a human being like us as our superior? Had it been an angel, may be we would have done that.' In answer to this what the Qur'ān has mentioned is the reply given by Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام to his people - where he had said that there was nothing to be surprised about the fact that a human being comes to people as the prophet or messenger of Allah to put His fear in their hearts, because it is a human being who can convince other human beings effectively.

After that they were reminded of the blessings Allah Ta'ālā had bestowed upon them. It was said: وَاذْكُرُوٓا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنۢ بَعْدِ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَّزَادَكُمْ فِي الْخَلْقِ بَصْۜطَةً

فَاذْكُرُوْٓا اٰلَاۤءَ اللّٰهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ (And remember when He made you successors after the people of Nūḥ and gave you increased strength in physique).

Remembering these blessings would have been for their own good, but wicked and intoxicated with power and wealth as they were, they paid no heed and gave a reply which was no different from what is generally given by people who have gone astray. They said that if Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام was trying to wean them away from the faith of their ancestors and hoping that they would abandon their idols and come around to believing in just one God, then, this they would never be able to do. As for the warning of punishment he was giving to them, they would say: go ahead and bring it upon us, if you are telling the truth.

(4) The sixth verse (70) contains the answer given by Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام. He told them that, in view of their contumacy and lack of good sense, the wrath and punishment of Allah would have not remained far and may come sooner than they expect. So, this was a matter of waiting. Let them wait for it, so shall he do. It would be noticed that the provoking reply given by his people prompted Sayyidnā Hūd to give a suitable answer which included the news that the punishment they were looking for was to come soon. But, he was a prophet. His paternal affection and the desire to do good to them forced him to say during the course of his reply that he regretted that his people had taken things without sense and life as objects of worship without having any proof from reason or revelation to support their position. Now they had become so staunch in their devotion to the false that they had started quarreling with him, a prophet of Allah.

(5) In the last verse (72) it was said that the final outcome of the entire struggle of Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام against the contumacy of the people of 'Ād was that Allah Ta'ālā kept Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام and those who had believed in him safe from the punishment and cut off the root of those who had belied him - and they were not of those who would have believed.

This story leaves a trail of good counsel. It reminds heedless human beings to keep remembering Allah and take to a life style which is marked with obedience to Him. Then, to those who elect to reject honest advice and refuse to learn a lesson, it shows what to expect in

the end. And, as for preachers and reformers, it is a mirror of the prophetic method of communication in *Tablīgh* and *Iṣlāḥ*.

Verses 73 - 76

وَإِلَىٰ ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَٰلِحًا قَالَ يَٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ
إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ هَٰذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةً
فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوهَا بِسُوءٍ فَيَأْخُذَكُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَاءَ مِن بَعْدِ عَادٍ
وَبَوَّأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُونَ مِن سُهُولِهَا قُصُورًا وَتَنْحِتُونَ
الْجِبَالَ بُيُوتًا فَاذْكُرُوا آلَاءَ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ
مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾ قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِن قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ
اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِمَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ أَتَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ صَٰلِحًا مُّرْسَلٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ
قَالُوا إِنَّا بِمَا أُرْسِلَ بِهِ مُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ قَالَ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا
بِالَّذِي آمَنتُم بِهِ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

And to Thamūd, (We sent) their brother, Ṣāliḥ. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord. This is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her to eat on the earth of Allah and do not touch her with mischief, lest a painful punishment should seize you. [73] **And remember when He made you successors after 'Ād and lodged you on earth (whereby) you make castles in its plains and hew out the mountains into houses. So be mindful of the bounties of Allah, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder."** [74]

The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant, said to the weakened, to those of them who believed, "Are you sure that Ṣāliḥ is a messenger from his Lord?" They said, "Surely, we believe in what he has been sent with." [75] **Those who were arrogant said, "Surely, we disbelieve in what you believe in."** [76]

Commentary

These verses tell us about Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and his people, the Thamūd. The account of the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام and Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام has appeared earlier. Similar introductions of past prophets and their peoples, highlighting the call of truth given by prophets and the disbelief and denial of their peoples, and the terrible consequences that overtook them continue to be the main subject as far as the end of Sūrah al-A'rāf.

In the first of the four verses cited above (73), it was said: وَاِلٰى ثَمُوْدَ اَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا (And to Thamūd, [We sent] their brother, Ṣāliḥ). Earlier, in the account given about the people of 'Ād, it was stated that 'Ād and Thamūd is the name of two persons who are among the progeny of the same grandfather. The children of these two also came to be known by their name and their two groups became two separate peoples. One of them was called the people of 'Ād and the other, the people of Thamūd. They lived in the north-western part of Arabia. Their main city was called Ḥijr which is now known as Madāin Ṣāliḥ. Like the people of 'Ād, the people of Thamūd were also wealthy, powerful, brave and artistically inclined. They were skilled in sculpture and architecture. Besides making palaces on open grounds, they were known to hew out mountains and create living spaces and structures on and inside them. In his book, 'Arḍ al-Qur'ān, Maulānā Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi has said that their architectural momentos still exist. They have Iramic and Thamūdic inscriptions carved on them.

It generally happens that worldly wealth and high living would estrange people away from the remembrance of their Creator and the ultimate encounter with Him in the Hereafter and push them on to the ways of error - as was the case with the people of Thamūd.

Not forgotten by the world of the time, though, was the punishment of Flood that came upon the people of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. Then, for them, the destruction of their brethren, the people of 'Ād was current history. But, wealth and power have a pull of their own. No sooner does one affluent structure collapse on its foundation, there comes another person, another group who would raise a higher structure on the same foundation totally ignoring what had happened before. When the people of 'Ād were destroyed, the people of Thamūd in-

herited their mansions and lands and it was at the same places they erected their venues of luxury, places where their own brethren had faced destruction. And as if this was not enough, they started indulging in the same deeds as were done by the people of 'Ād. They too became heedless of their Creator and unmindful of the Hereafter only to stoop to the level of worshiping idols and associating others in the Divinity of Allah. Then, Allah Ta'ālā - in accordance with His constant practice - sent Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام as His messenger so that he would guide them on to the straight path. Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, in terms of his lineage and country, was one of the people of Thamūd as he too came from the progeny of Sām. Therefore, the Qur'ān has called him a brother of the people of Thamūd - as in: أَخَاهُمْ صٰلِحًا (their brother, Ṣāliḥ - 73). The call given by Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام to his people is no different from the call messengers from Sayyidnā Adam عليه السلام to the last of them have been giving all along - as mentioned in the Qur'ān: وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِيْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُوْلًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوْتَ (We have sent to every community a messenger so that he tells them to worship Allah and shun idols - 16:36). This is what Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام said to his people, just as it was done by past prophets: يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ إِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ (O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him).

Then, along with it, he also said: قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ that is, now there has come to you from your Lord a very clear sign. This 'sign' refers to the unusual she-camel which finds a brief mention in the present verse while details appear in different Sūrahs of the Qur'ān. The background of this event concerning the she-camel goes back to the time when Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام started preaching as a young man. He kept doing his duty until marks of old age started showing on him. He still did not seem to give up. His people became impatient with his repeated efforts to make them believe in one God. So they decided to come up with a demand which it would be impossible for him to fulfill and, as a result, they would prevail as winners of the confrontation. The demand that they made was: If you are really a messenger of Allah, make a she-camel come out from Kātibah, this hill of ours, and it has to be in its tenth month of pregnancy while being strong and healthy.

The first thing Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام did was to take a pledge

from them. He asked them if he fulfilled this demand of theirs, would they all believe in him and in his Da'wah. When all of them made a compact, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام made two *raka'at* of Ṣalāh and made a *Du'ā'* before Allah Ta'ālā: For You nothing is difficult. Let their demand be fulfilled. Soon after the *Du'ā'*, there was a rumble in the hill, a big rock blasted out, and out came a she-camel as demanded.

Seeing this mind-boggling miracle of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, some from among those people became believers instantly. As for the rest of them, they too decided to enter the fold of faith they have been rejecting upto that time. But, some of their chiefs who were the real promoters of idol-worship, talked them out of it. When Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام saw that his people had broken the pledge, he was concerned for them. The danger was that they might be subjected to punishment for having done that. Thus, feeling for them, he advised them not to harm the she-camel in any way, and keep protecting it, in which case, they may stay safe against the danger of punishment, otherwise, they might be seized in punishment immediately. This is the subject matter of what has been said in the following sentences of verse 73: هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةُ اللّٰهِ لَكُمْ اٰيَةً فَذَرُوْهَا تَاْكُلْ فِيْٓ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَمَسُّوْهَا بِسُوْٓءٍ فَيَاْخُذَكُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ (This is the she-camel of Allah, a sign for you. So, leave her to eat on the earth of Allah and do not touch her with mischief, lest a painful punishment should seize you). This she-camel has been called 'the she-camel of Allah' because it was a proof of the perfect power of Allah and had appeared in an extraordinary manner as a miracle of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام. The expression: تَاْكُلْ فِيْٓ اَرْضِ اللّٰهِ (to eat on the earth of Allah) indicates that the she-camel should be left free to eat and drink because what she would eat and drink was not owned by them. The earth belonged to Allah and He was the creator of the produce it yielded. So, she was to be left free to eat from the natural grazing grounds of the earth of Allah.

The well from which the people of Thamūd got their water was the one from which this she-camel got her share of water to drink. But, when this she-camel, an extra ordinary creation of Allah, drank her share of water, she would drink up all the water in the well. Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had, following the Divine will, given the verdict that the she-camel would drink water from the well one day and the next day the rest of Thamūd people will have water from the well for them-

selves. It so happened that the day the she-camel drank water from the well, others would get milk from the she-camel, in lieu of water, in such quantity that they would fill out their water containers with it. This distribution of water has been referred to elsewhere in the Qur'ān in the following words addressed to Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ (عليه السلام): وَنَبِّئْهُمْ أَنَّ الْمَآءَ قِسْمَةٌ بَيْنَهُمْ كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ (54:28) that is, the water of the well is to be divided between them, one day for the she-camel and the other for his people, and this distribution will be watched by angels lest anyone does against it.' In another verse (26:155), it was said: هٰذِهٖ نَاقَةٌ لَّهَا شِرْبٌ وَّلَكُمْ شِرْبُ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ that is, 'this is a she- camel of Allah; water for one day is her right and water for the other day is fixed for you'.

In the second verse (74), concern has been shown for these pledge-breaking and contumacious people lest they find themselves subjected to Divine punishment. For this purpose they have been reminded of the favours and blessings of Allah Ta'ālā upon them in the hope that they would alter their uncompromising stance and abandon their doggedness and rebellion. It was said: وَاذْكُرُوْٓا اِذْ جَعَلَكُمْ خُلَفَآءَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عَادٍ وَّبَوَّاَكُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ تَتَّخِذُوْنَ مِنْ سُهُوْلِهَا قُصُوْرًا وَّتَنْحِتُوْنَ الْجِبَالَ بُيُوْتًا (And remember when He made you successors after 'Ād and lodged you on earth [whereby] you make castles in its plains and hew out the mountains into houses). Here, the word: خُلَفَآءَ (*khulafā'*) is the plural of *khalīfah* which means deputy or viceregent and: قُصُوْر (*quṣūr*) is the plural of *qaṣr* which means a palace or palatial building. The word: تَنْحِتُوْنَ (*tanḥitūna*) is a derivation from *naḥt* which means sculpture or stone-carving. '*Jibāl*' is the plural of *jabal* meaning a mountain. '*Buyūt*' is the plural of *bayt* which denotes a house or rooms in it. The sense of the verse is that they should remember the blessing of Allah Ta'ālā that He, after the destruction of the people of 'Ād, brought them to settle in their place, gave their lands and homes to them as the new owners, and bestowed on them the skill with which they could raise big palaces on open surfaces and hew out mountains to make rooms and apartments inside them. Then, at the end of the verse, it was said: فَاذْكُرُوْٓا اٰلَآءَ اللّٰهِ وَلَا تَعْثَوْا فِی الْاَرْضِ مُفْسِدِيْنَ (So be mindful of the bounties of Allah, and do not go about the earth spreading disorder).

Injunctions and Rulings

Some fundamental and subsidiary rulings emerge from the cited

verse. These are as follows:

(1) There is a unanimous agreement of all prophets, may peace be upon them all, on fundamental articles of faith and, similarly, united stand their religious codes or Sharī'ahs. All of them invite towards Tauḥīd or absolutely pure monotheism as the basis of worshiping Allah, and they all warn against contravention of this concept which brings punishment in this world and in the Hereafter.

(2) It has happened in past communities too that the wealthy and the traditional holders of social prestige have not said yes to the call of prophets as a result of which they were disgraced and destroyed in this world and became deserving of punishment in the Hereafter as well.

(3) According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, this verse tells us that the blessings of Allah in this world are directed to and shared by disbelievers as well - as was the case with the people of 'Ād and Thamūd to whom Allah Ta'ālā had given great wealth and power.

(4) According to Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī, once again, this verse tells us that palaces and mansions are blessings of Allah Ta'ālā and their making is permissible.

However, this is an entirely different matter that the noble prophets and the men of Allah have not favoured them as they make people heedless. The sayings of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم about high-rising buildings are of this nature.

The Confrontation Between the Arrogant and the Weakened

The third (75) and the fourth (76) verses carry a dialogue between two groups of the people of Thamūd. One of these was of those who had come to believe that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام was a prophet while the other was that of deniers and disbelievers. Says the verse: قَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا لِمَنْ آمَنَ مِنْهُمْ (The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant said to the weakened, to those of them who believed).

In Tafsīr Kabīr, Imām Rāzi has said: At this place, the Holy Qur'ān identifies two qualities of these two groups, but the quality or trait of the disbelievers was mentioned in the active voice (اِسْتَكْبَرُوْا: who were arrogant) while the quality or state of the believers was identified

through the passive (أُسْتُضْعِفُوْا : the weakened). It indicates that the condition of the disbelievers - that they were arrogant - was what they chose to do at their own discretion which was questionable and blameworthy, and which finally became the cause of their punishment. As for the quality or state of believers which these people put as weak and low, it was something said by disbelievers. Their description had nothing to do with the actual state and quality of believers, something which could be considered blameworthy in any manner whatsoever. In fact, blameworthy are those who call them weak and low, and take them to be so, without any reason. After that comes the dialogue which has occured between these two groups where the disbelievers said to the believers: 'Are you sure that Ṣāliḥ is a messenger from his Lord?'

The reply given by the believers was: 'Surely , we believe in what he has been sent with.'

The famous Tafsīr Kashshāf says: What an eloquent answer was given by the believers from the people of Thamūd when they said: 'All this debate of yours - is he a messenger of Allah or is he not? - is just not worth debating. In fact, this is obvious, foregone and certain. And equally certain is that what he says is a message brought from Allah Ta'ālā. If there is anything worth talking about here, it is: Who believes in him and who does not? So, as for us, praise be to Allah, we do believe in every word of guidance brought by him.'

But, even this eloquent answer could not soften the disbelieving people of Thamūd. They countered back coldly and arrogantly saying that they rejected what they had accepted. The lust of worldly life is merciless. So is the toxic elation of having wealth and power. May Allah Ta'ālā keep all of us protected for they become invisible curtains before human eyes which would not let those seeing eyes see the obvious.

Verses 77 - 79

فَعَقَرُوا النَّاقَةَ وَعَتَوْا عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِمْ وَقَالُوا يٰصٰلِحُ ائْتِنَا بِمَا
تَعِدُنَآ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِيْنَ ﴿٧٧﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ

فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾ فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ
لَقَدْ أَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّي وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلٰكِن لَّا تُحِبُّونَ
النّٰصِحِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

Then they slaughtered the she-camel and defied the command of their Lord and said, "O Ṣāliḥ, bring us what you threaten us with, if you are one of the messengers." [77] **So, the earthquake seized them, and they were (found dead) in their homes, fallen on their breasts.** [78]

So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished you betterment, but you do not like the sincere advisers." [79]

Commentary

It has appeared in previous verses that the *Du‘ā'* of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had made a big rock open up in the nearby mountain through which an extra-ordinary she-camel had come out. Then, Allah Ta‘ālā had made this she-camel the last trial for these people as she drank up all water from the well which was used by the people and animals of the locality for their needs. Therefore, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام had fixed turns, a day for the she-camel and another for the people of the area.

The people of Thamūd were in trouble because of this she-camel. They wished she would somehow die. But, they did not dare do it themselves lest they are hit by some Divine punishment.

But, Satan has an unlimited array of weapons. One of his deadliest strategies of deception which makes human beings surrender whatever sense and sensibility they have is the trial through women. So, two beautiful damsels from the people of Thamūd threw a wager: Whoever kills this she-camel could take us, or anyone from among our girls to become his own.

Two youngmen from Thamūd, called Miṣda‘ and Qadhār, all drunk with the rosy prospect, went out to kill the she-camel. They hid themselves behind a big rock and waited for the she-camel to pass by them on its usual route. When the she-camel appeared before them, Miṣda‘

hit her with an arrow and Qadhār hamstrung her by cutting her legs with his sword. Thus, they killed the she-camel.

The Holy Qur'ān calls this person the most cruel and wretched from among the people of Thamūd: إِذِ انْبَعَثَ أَشْقٰهَا (when the one, most wicked of them, was sent [incited to kill her] - 91:12) because that was what brought mass punishment on the people of Thamūd.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, after having found that the she-camel has been killed, told his people - as Divinely commanded - that they have only three days to live: تَمَتَّعُوْا فِىْ دَارِكُمْ ثَلٰثَةَ أَيَّامٍ ذٰلِكَ وَعْدٌ غَيْرُ مَكْذُوْبٍ that is, 'enjoy yourselves in your homes for three days (only) [after that the punishment is coming]. That is a promise, not going to be false - 11:65.' But, when the undoing of a people becomes due, no advice or warning works. This is what happened with these wretched people. Even the very honest counsel of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام did not produce the desired effect. In turn, they started making fun of him by challenging him as to how and from where would this punishment come and what would be the signs of its coming.

Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام said: 'You want signs, so hear this. Tomorrow, on Thursday, your faces will turn dark yellow. Men, women, the young and the old, no one will remain exempted. Then, day after tomorrow, on Friday, all faces will turn dark red; and on Saturday, the third day to come, all faces will turn jet black. And this day will be the last day of your life.' Despite having heard what was said, these wretched people, rather than repent and seek forgiveness, decided that they better kill Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام himself. Their 'logic' was: If he is true and the punishment has to come upon them, why should they not finish him first before the punishment comes to finish them - and if he is a liar, then, let him have his punishment for lying. This intention of the people of Thamūd finds mention in details at other places in the Qur'ān. Under this unanimous verdict of the Thamudites, some of them went to the house of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام with the intention of killing him. But, as Allah Ta'ālā would have it, they were killed by a hail of rocks while still on their way. Says the Qur'ān: وَمَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا وَّمَكَرْنَا مَكْرًا وَّهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُوْنَ that is,'and they made a plan and We made a plan and they were not aware' - 27:50.

When came the morning of Thursday, then, as stated by Sayyidnā

Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, the faces of all of them turned as yellow as if painted with a deep yellow colour. The first sign of the coming of punishment stood proved true. Yet, those tyrants were not to be mellowed enough to believe in Allah Ta'ālā and desist from their wrongdoings. In fact, their wrath on Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام increased all the more and everyone started running around to find and kill him. May Allah Ta'ālā protect everyone from His wrath, for that too has its signs which turn hearts and minds upside down, when people start taking their gain as their loss, and their loss as their gain, and their good as bad, and their bad as good.

At last came the second day and, true to the prophecy, everyone's face turned red; and then, came the third day when they turned jet black. Now there was nowhere to go. All disappointed, they stood waiting to see which way the punishment comes.

In this state of theirs, a severe earthquake struck from down below the earth, and from above tore in a horrendously shrill cry, an awesomely severe sound. This cry or sound caused everyone to die, instantly and simultaneously, fallen upside down, (like some dead bird landing on the ground on its breast - see '*Jāthimīn*' in Mufradāt al-Qur'ān). As for the coming of the earthquake, it does find mention in verse 78 which appears above, that is: فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ (So, the earthquake seized them). The word: الرَّجْفَةُ (*ar-rajfah*) means earthquake.

Other verses of the Qur'ān have also mentioned: فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ (that is, a Cry or Sound seized them - 15:83). The word: الصَّيْحَةُ (Aṣ-Ṣaiḥah) means a shrill cry or severe sound. From these two verses, we find out that two kinds of punishment had simultaneously converged on the people of Thamūd, the earthquake from below and the 'Ṣaiḥah' from above. The result was: فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِينَ (and they were [found dead] in their homes, fallen on their knees - 77). The word: جٰثِمِينَ (*jāthimīn*) is a derivation from the verbal noun: *Juthūm*, which means to be rendered senseless and motionless at one spot, or remain sitting (Al-Qāmūs). The sense is that everyone lay dead as and where one was. نَعُوذُ بِاللّٰهِ مِنْ قَهْرِهٖ وَعَذَابِهٖ (We seek refuge with Allah from His Wrath and His Punishment).

Important parts of this story of the people of Thamūd have been mentioned in the different Sūrahs of the Qur'ān itself. Some parts appear in Ḥadīth narrations. There are some others which commentators

have taken from Israelite narratives, but the proof of an event or its reality does not depend on them.

It appears in a Ḥadīth of the Ṣaḥīḥ of Al-Bukhārī that, during a journey related to the Battle of Tabūk, the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his Ṣaḥabah passed by Ḥijr, the place where the people of Thamūd had faced their punishment. At that spot, he gave instructions to the Ṣaḥabah that no one should go into the land area of that punishment-stricken habitation, nor should anyone use water from its wells. (Maẓharī)

According to some narrations, the Holy Prophet ﷺ said: When the punishment overtook the people of Thamūd, no one survived except one person, Abū Righāl. He was in the Ḥaram of Makkah at that time. Allah Ta'ālā spared him of the punishment at that time because of the sanctity of the Ḥaram of Makkah. Finally, when he came out of the Ḥarām, the same punishment which had seized his people visited him as well, and right there he met his death. The Holy Prophet ﷺ also showed people the marks of the grave of Abū Righal on the outskirts of Makkah; and he also said that a walking stick made of gold was also buried with him. When the Ṣaḥabah opened the grave, they found the gold stick there which was taken out. Mentioned in the same narration is that Banū Thaqīf, the inhabitants of Ṭā'if are the progeny of this very Abū Righāl. (Maẓharī)

Allah Ta'ālā, in His infinite wisdom, has allowed these habitations of punished peoples to stay as signposts of lesson for coming generations. The Holy Qur'ān has repeatedly warned the people of Arabia that these places which come on their travel route to Syria should bring home to them their essential lesson in the rise and fall of peoples: لَمْ تُسْكَنْ مِّنْ بَعْدِهِمْ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا that is, (these are the dwellings of ungrateful people We destroyed and which) have not been lived in after them, except a little - 28:58).

After the mention of the event of punishment which overtook the people of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام, it was finally said: فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسَالَةَ رَبِّيْ وَنَصَحْتُ لَكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُحِبُّوْنَ النّٰصِحِيْنَ (So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished you betterment, but you people do not like the sincere advisers - 79), that is, after the visit of punishment on his peo-

ple, Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام and those who had believed in him left that place and went somewhere else. In some narrations, it appears that there were four thousand believers with Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام. He went along with them to Hadramaut in Yaman. It was there that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام passed away from this mortal world. However, some narrations report his going to Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah and where it was that he passed away.

From the outward arrangement of the text, it appears that Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام addressed his people while departing - O my people, I have certainly delivered to you the message of my Lord and have wished the best for you, but you do not seem to like honest advisers.

The question is when his people have been destroyed by the punishment, what is the use of addressing them now. The answer is that one good that may come out of it is that people in general would learn their lesson. This form of address resembles the address of the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم when he had said a few words addressing dead disbelievers from the tribe of Quraysh in the Battle of Badr. And then, it is also possible that this saying of Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام came to pass before the coming of the punishment and the destruction of his people - though, in the textual arrangement, it has been mentioned later.

Verses 80 - 84

وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ
مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾ إِنَّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِ
النِّسَآءِ ط بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُوْنَ ﴿٨١﴾ وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهٖٓ
إِلَّآ أَنْ قَالُوْٓا أَخْرِجُوْهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أُنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُوْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾
فَأَنْجَيْنٰهُ وَأَهْلَهٗٓ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهٗ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغٰبِرِيْنَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا
عَلَيْهِمْ مَّطَرًا ط فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِيْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾

And (We sent) Lūṭ when he said to his people, "Do you commit the shameful act in which nobody has ever preceded you from all the worlds? [80] **Surely, you come to**

men lustfully instead of women. No, you are a people who cross the limits." [81]

And the answer of his people was not but that they said, "Expel them from your town. They are a people who seek to be pure." [82] **So, We saved him and his family, except his wife. She was one of the rest.** [83] **And We rained down upon them a rain. So look, how was the fate of the sinners!** [84]

Commentary

Out of the continuing series of stories relating to prophets عليهم السلام and their communities, the fourth story is that of Sayyidnā Lūṭ (Lot) عليه السلام.

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام is a nephew of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm Khalīlullāh عليه السلام, the patriarch of prophets. The original homeland of both was known as Babel near Baṣrah in western Irāq. Idol-worship was common. Even the family of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was involved in it. Allah Ta'ālā sent Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام as a prophet for their guidance. His people opposed him which culminated in the well known Fire of Nimrūd. Even his father threatened to turn him out of his home.

Out of his entire family, only his wife, Sayyidah Sārah and nephew, Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام embraced Islam: فَآمَنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ (Then, Lūṭ believed in him - 29:26). Finally, it was with these two that he emigrated to Syria leaving his home country behind. After reaching Jordon river, he settled in Can'ān near Bayt al-Maqdis under a Divine command.

Then, Allah Ta'ālā made Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام too a prophet and sent him to Sadūm (Sodom) near Bayt al-Maqdis for the guidance of people there. This area comprised of five major cities. They were called Sadūm, 'Amūrah, Admah, Sububim and Bālī' or Sawghar. The Qur'ān has referred to their nucleus as 'Mu'tafikah' and 'Mu'tafikāt' at several places. Sadūm was considered as the center and capital of these cities. It was here that Sayyidnā Lut عليه السلام stayed. The land was fertile and verdant abounding in all kinds of grains and fruits. (These details appear in Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ, Maẓharī, Ibn Kathīr, Al-Manār etc.)

Man's habit, as Allah Ta'ālā says in the Qur'ān, is: كَلَّآ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَيَطْغَىٰٓ أَن رَّآهُ اسْتَغْنَىٰ that is, when he acquires freedom from need, he starts trans-

gressing the limits - 96:6. On these people too, Allah Ta'ālā had opened the doors of His blessings. Goaded by this common behaviour pattern, all soaked in wealth and possessions, they reached the farthest ends of luxury and lust when they stood deprived of the most essential human sense of honour, dignity and modesty, and lost in that process, the very ability to distinguish between the good and the bad. In consequence, they got themselves involved in acts of unnatural indecencies. These are abominal acts, apart from being Ḥarām and sinful, acts which cause hatred and distaste in the heart and mind of everyone born with sound and decent taste, so much so, that even animals would not go near it.

Allah Ta'ālā appointed Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام for their guidance. He addressed his people and said: أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُم بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعٰلَمِينَ (Do you commit the shameful act in which nobody has ever preceded you from all the worlds?).

When refering to Zinā (adultery), the Qur'ān has said: إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً (Surely, it is a shameful act - 17:32). Here, the word: فَاحِشَة (*fāḥishah*: shameful act) has been mentioned without *'Alif Lām* while in the present verse, by saying: الْفَاحِشَةَ (*al-fāḥishah* : the shameful act), it has been made definite by the addition of *'Alif Lām*. Thus, the hint given is that this unnatural evil act is, as if, the combination of all indecencies, and far grave a crime as compared to Zinā.

Then, it was said that this shameful act has never been committed by anyone in all the worlds before they did it. 'Amrū ibn Dīnār has said: The act was unknown in the world before these people. (Maẓharī) Neither had the worst of human being had ever thought on those lines before the people of Sadūm. The Umayyad Khalīfah, 'Abd al-Mālik said: Had this event relating to the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام not been mentioned in the Qur'ān, I would have never suspected that a human being could do something like that. (Ibn Kathīr)

Here, their immodesty has been censured on two grounds: (1) It so happens that men would get involved in many sins because of their social conditions, or because of a blind following of their ancestors - though, that too, is not a valid legal excuse in the Sharī'ah of Islam. But, as a matter of customary practice, such a person could be taken as excusable in some or the other degree. But, when it comes to a sin

which has never been committed by anyone before, nor does it have any particular compulsions of its own, it becomes a curse of the highest degree. (2) The other ground is that this act becomes a channel of making others equally accursed. Think of a person who invents some evil act or custom. As obvious, the sin and punishment of his evil act falls on that person anyway, but, alongwith him, affected are all who sink in sin led by the act of the originator right through the Last Day, for the curse and punishment of all those so affected also sits on the shoulders of the originator of the evil.

In the second verse (81), this immodesty has been stated more explicitly - 'Surely, you come to men lustfully instead of women.' Here, the hint given is that, for the natural satisfaction of human desire, Allah Ta'ālā has appointed marrying women as a lawful method. Now, to bypass it and opt for an unnatural method is bland ugliness of the human self and certainly the proof of a dirty mind.

Therefore, the Ṣaḥabah, the Tābi'īn and Mujtahid Imāms have declared this crime and sin to be far more grave than other acts of shame. Imām Abū Ḥanīfah has said: The punishment given to the person who commits this act should match the punishment which came upon the people of Lūṭ عليه السلام by the command of Allah Ta'ālā - that rocks rained from the skies and the floor of the earth flipped upside down. Therefore, this person should be pushed down from a high mountain and rocks should be thrown from above on top of him. According to a narration of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ in the Musnad of Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd, Tirmidhī, and Ibn Mājah, the Holy Prophet صلی اللہ علیہ وسلم said about the people who commit this evil act: فاقتلوا الفاعل والمفعول به that is, the doer of this evil deed and his passive partner (*al-maf'ūlu bihī*: with whom it was done) should both be killed. (Ibn Kathīr)

At the end of the verse (81), it was said: بَلْ اَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُوْنَ (No, you are a people who cross the limits). In other words, their real disease was that they would go beyond the limits set by Allah for everything - in their case, it would be the very limit of humanity they would be hopping over. The same thing happened about sexual desire when they crossed the limits appointed by Allah only to reach for a taste of the counter-natural.

In the third verse (82), the answer given by the people of Sayyidnā

Lūṭ عليه السلام in response to his word of advice has been put in a way that it shows that his people could not find a suitable rejoinder to what he had said. But, they were still adamant and started saying among themselves that these people seem to be self-righteous claiming a lot of purity for themselves. The treatment they deserved was that they should be thrown out of their town.

Mentioned in the fourth (83) and the fifth (84) verses is the Divine punishment given to the people of Sadūm for their crooked and immodest practice. As a consequence, the punishment of Allah Ta'ālā descended on the entire people with the exception of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and some of his companions who remained safe from the punishment. The words of the Qur'ān say: فَأَنجَيْنَٰهُ وَأَهْلَهُۥٓ (We saved him and his '*ahl*'). Who were these '*ahl*?' Some commentators say that included in '*ahl*' were two women who had become Muslims. The wife was not. Mentioned in another verse of the Qur'ān is: فَمَا وَجَدْنَا فِيهَا غَيْرَ بَيْتٍ مِّنَ ٱلْمُسْلِمِينَ that is, in all those habitations, there was no Muslim home except one - 51:36. This obviously shows that only people from the household of Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام were the ones who were saved from the punishment - and that did not include his wife. Some other commentators say that *ahl*' is general. It refers to his own family as well as others who had joined him by embracing Islam. To sum up, it can be said that they were a counted few Muslims to save whom Allah Ta'ālā ordered Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام to take, except his wife, with him and get out of that habitation late in the night and be sure not to look back, because when they are out of the habitation, the punishment would instantly descend on those in it.

Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام followed the Divine command. He went out of the limits of Sadūm with his family and companions late in the night. There are two reports about the wife: (1) She just did not go with them; (2) That she did start off with them and walked on for a while, but since she was eager to see the fate of the people she had left behind, quite contrary to the initial Divine command, she was seized by the punishment. This event has been mentioned in the Qur'ān at several occasions in varying details. Here, in the fourth verse (83), it has been briefly said that Allah Ta'ālā saved Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام and his family and companions from the punishment, but his wife was left

with the rest in it. The additional details of how they were saved and how they were asked to leave the habitation late in night and were not to look back appear in other verses.

In the fifth verse (84), the punishment which came on these people has been described in a few words - that an unusual rain was sent upon them. The details of this punishment appear in Sūrah Hūd where it is said:

فَلَمَّا جَآءَ أَمْرُنَا جَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيلٍ مَّنْضُودٍ. مُسَوَّمَةً عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ بِبَعِيدٍ

(So, when Our command came, We turned its highest into its lowest, and We rained on it stones of hard clay, one over another marked, with your Lord. And they are not far from the transgressors - 11:82-83).

This tells us that the rain of stones came from above and from down below, angel Jibra'īl lifted up the whole crust of the earth and threw it back upside down. Then, the stones which rained down were one over the other, that is, the stone rained so ceaselessly that they kept collecting one on top the next. These stones were marked. Some commentators say that every such stone was marked with the name of the person who was destined to be destroyed with it. And in the verses of Sūrah Al-Hijr, also mentioned before the account of the punishment is: فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ مُشْرِقِيْنَ that is, a Sound seized them at sunrise - 15:73).

This indicates that first to come was some harsh Sound from the skies, then came other punishments. The outward arrangement of the words shows that it was after this Sound that the earth crust was turned upside down and then, stones were rained on them to put a stamp on their disgrace. And it is also possible that the rain of stones came first and the turning over of the earth crust came later. The reason is that, given the style of the Qur'ān, it is not necessary that something mentioned earlier should have also occured earlier.

Out of the horrendous punishments sent on the people of Sayyidnā Lūṭ علیه السلام, the punishment of turning the floor of the earth upside down has a particular correspondence with their act of shame and immodesty because they were guilty of perversion.

Towards the end of the verses of Sūrah Hūd cited a little earlier, the Qur'ān has warned the people of Arabia when it says: وَمَا هِيَ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ بِبَعِيدٍ that is, these upturned habitations were not far from the transgressors. They pass by them while traveling to Syria but it is surprising that they would learn no lesson from them.

And these sights are not restricted with the time the Holy Qur'ān was being revealed. They are still there between Bayt al-Maqdis and Jordon river, particularly the area known as the Sea of Lūṭ or the Dead Sea. It lies way deep below the sea level. On a particular section, there is water which is unusual. No sea life survives there. Hence, the name: Dead Sea. This is said to be the legendary Sodom. May Allah keep us safe from His Punishment and Wrath.

Verses 85 - 87

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا ۗ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ
إِلَٰهٍ غَيْرُهُ ۖ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُم بَيِّنَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۖ فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ
وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي
الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُم مُّؤْمِنِينَ
﴿٨٥﴾ وَلَا تَقْعُدُوا بِكُلِّ صِرَاطٍ تُوعِدُونَ وَتَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ
اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِهِ وَتَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا ۚ وَاذْكُرُوا إِذْ كُنتُمْ قَلِيلًا
فَكَثَّرَكُمْ ۖ وَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾ وَإِن كَانَ
طَائِفَةٌ مِّنكُمْ آمَنُوا بِالَّذِي أُرْسِلْتُ بِهِ وَطَائِفَةٌ لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا
فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّىٰ يَحْكُمَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَنَا ۚ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الْحَاكِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

And (We sent) to Madyan his brother, Shu'aib. He said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him. There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord. And fill the measure and weight in full, and do not make people short of their things, and do not make mischief on the earth after it has been set in order. That is good for you, if you are believers. [85] **And do not sit in every path threatening, and prevent from the**

way of Allah the people who believe in Him, and seeking a twist in it. And remember the time when you were few, then He increased you in number. And look, how was the fate of the mischief makers. [86] **And if a group from among you has believed in what I have been sent with, and another group has not believed then, keep patience until Allah decides between us. And He is the best of all judges."** [87]

Commentary

The series of stories relating to prophets عليهم السلام continues. The fifth story appears in the verses quoted above. This is the story of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام and his people.

Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام, according to Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq, is among the progeny of Madyan, the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام, and he is also related to Sayyidnā Lūṭ عليه السلام. The lineal descendants of Madyan, the son of Sayyidnā Ibrāhīm عليه السلام also came to be known by the name, Madyan - and the locality where they lived is also called Madyan. Thus, Madyan is the name of a people and the name of a city as well. This city still survives near the port of Ma'ān in Eastern Jordan. When relating the story of Sayyidnā Mūsā عليه السلام elsewhere, the Qur'ān says: وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ (And when he arrived at the watering [place] in Madyan - 28:23), it is referring to this very habitation. (Ibn Kathīr) Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was known for his impressive oratory because of which he was called the Orator among Prophets. (Ibn Kathīr, Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

The people to whom Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent have been identified by the Holy Qur'ān as the residents or people of Madyan, and also as the people of *Aikah*. The word: ايكہ (*Aikah*) means a forest.

Some commentators say that these were two different people and lived in separate settlements. Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent to one of them first. When they were destroyed, he was sent to the other. The punishment which came upon these two has also been stated in different words. The punishment of the *Rajfah* on the people of Madyan is mentioned as Ṣaiḥah (Sound) at some places, while as *Rajfah* (earthquake) at others. The punishment of the people of *Aikah* has been stated as being that of Ẓullah (shade, canopy). The form in which this punishment came was that the people of *Aikah* were first subject-

ed to intense heat in their locality which almost roasted them. Then, in the forest closeby there came a dense cloud which cast its shade over the entire forest. Attracted by the shade and cool breeze there, all inhabitants of the locality assembled under the shade of that cloud. As Divine arrangement would have it, here were its criminals walking on their two feet and reaching the exact spot where they were to be destroyed, without a warrant of arrest and without a police gun pointed at them. Once they were all there, the clouds rained fire and the earthquake shook the earth. That killed them all.

Then, there are other commentators who say that the people of Madyan and the people of *Aikah* are the same people and the three kinds of punishment mentioned here converged on these people. First came the Fire from the clouds, then, with it, rose the piercing Sound, and then, the earthquake shook the earth. Ibn Kathīr has favoured this view.

However, whether these two people are separate or are two names of the same people, what matters is the message of truth delivered to them by Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیہ السلام - and that has been mentioned in the first (85) and second (86) verses. Before we move on to the explanation of this message, let us first understand that the essence of Islam, which is the combined call of all blessed prophets, is the fulfillment of mutual rights. Then rights are of two kinds. First come rights which are related directly to Allah Ta'ālā. No visible human gain or loss seems to depend on their fulfillment or abandonment, for example, praying and fasting (Ṣalāh and Ṣawm). Secondly, there are the rights of the servants of Allah (*Ḥuqūq al-'Ibād*: human rights - in secular terminology) which are related to human beings. These people were heedless to and unaware of both these rights, in fact, were acting counter to both.

By not believing in Allah Ta'ālā and His messengers, they were violating the rights of Allah, and on top of it, by decreasing weights and measures, they were slicing through and wasting away the rights of human beings. Then, such people would go on to sit on entry points of roads and streets and would terrorize all comers, rob them of their belongings, and warned them of worse consequences if they believed in Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیہ السلام. And thus, on God's good earth, they had

made disorder the order of the day. It was to correct these misdeeds that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was sent to them.

In the first and second verses quoted above, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said three things to correct the course of his people: (1) First he said: يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللّٰهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ اِلٰهٍ غَيْرُهٗ (O my people, worship Allah. You have no god other than Him). This is the same *Da'wah*, the call to *Tauḥīd*, the Oneness of Allah, which all blessed prophets have been giving all along the lanes of time, a call which is the spirit of all true beliefs and deeds. Since these people too were all sold to the worship of the created, and consequently, heedless to the sacred Being and Attributes of Allah Ta'ālā, and thus, neglectful of the fulfillment of His rights. Therefore, this was the first message given to them. (2) Then, it was said: قَدْ جَآءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ (There has come to you a clear sign from your Lord). Here, 'clear signs' or proofs refers to the miracles which were manifested at the hands of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. The different forms in which these miracles had appeared find mention in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ.

(3) The statement which follows lays down a major rule of just conduct. It was said: فَاَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ (And fill the measure and weight in full, and do not make people short of their things). The word: كَيْل (*kail*) means measure, and: ميزان (*mīzān*) is used in the sense of weighing, and: بَخْس (*bakhs*) means to bring loss on someone by giving one less than what is due. Thus, the instruction given in the verse is to give full measure and weight and to abstain from causing loss to them by holding back what is their due.

In the first part of the verse, the particular crime of under-measuring or under-weighing in buying and selling was prohibited. Later, by saying: لَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ اَشْيَآءَهُمْ (and do not make people short of their things), the prohibition was generalized. Now the prohibition applies to all kinds of decreasing, slicing, under-cutting or short-changing of rights - whether related to property, or honour, or something else. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

From here we know that the way it is forbidden to give less than due while weighing and measuring, similarly, forbidden is any cutting back on the human rights of other people. Acts like attacking someone's honour, not giving due respect to someone according to his legiti-

mate station, showing shortcoming in obeying those the showing of obedience to whom is necessary and failing to respect those who must compulsorily and duly be respected are included under the purview of the crime which used to be committed by the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. During his famous *Khuṭbah* of the Last *Ḥajj*, when the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم declared that the honour of people is as worthy of being respected and defended as their blood is, stands as a broader confirmation of this view.

All these things are included under the words: مُطَفِّفِيْن (*muṭaffifīn*) and: تَطْفِيْف (*taṭfīf*) wherever mentioned in the Qur'ān. Sayyidnā Fārūq al-A'ẓam رضى الله عنه saw a person making his Rukū' and Sajdah in a hurry. He said: قَدْ طَفَّفْتَ (that is, you are guilty of measuring and weighing short -Mu'aṭṭa Imām Mālik). By saying so, he meant that the person had not fulfilled the right of Ṣalāh as it was due. Thus, in this report, the shortcoming of not fulfilling the right of Ṣalāh as due has been referred to by the word: تطفيف (*taṭfīf* : measuring and weighing short).

At the end of the verse, it was said: وَلَا تُفْسِدُوْا فِى الْاَرْضِ بَعْدَ اِصْلَاحِهَا (and do not make mischief on the earth after it has been set in order). This sentence has also appeared earlier in this Sūrah Al-A'rāf (for details, please see comments under verse 56) where it was said that the physical betterment of conditions on the earth depends on utilizing things properly - as and where due, respecting limits and maintaining moderation, equity and justice; and spiritual betterment depends on relationship with Allah and obedience to His commands. As for the opposite of it, that is, physical and spiritual disorder on earth, it shows up when these principles are compromised or abandoned.The people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام had done exactly this. They had totally abandoned these principles because of which earth had become a hotbed of physical and spiritual disorder. That is why they were advised to abstain from such deeds which would serve as corrupting influence for the whole earth.

Then, it was said: ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ (This is good for you, if you are believers). The sense is that should they repent and retract from their evil doings, it has nothing but good waiting for them in their present life as well as in the life to come. As for the prosperity and success in the life to come is concerned, it is obvious that it depends on

one's obedience to what Allah has commanded us to do. Then, as for success in the present world, we can say once people find out that there is someone who is honest in weights and measures and is particular about all other rights of his clients, his credit and goodwill will become established in the market and his business will increase in volume and reliability.

Determining the meaning of the statement - 'Do not sit in every path threatening and preventing people from the path of Allah' - in verse 86, some commentators have said that both sentences carry the same sense since these people stopped and threatened those who came to Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. This they were ordered not to do.

Others have said that these crimes committed by them were two separate crimes. They sat on thoroughfares, looted and snatched things, and also prevented people from believing in Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام. Thus, the first sentence describes the first crime while the second sentence describes the other. The later view has been relied upon in Tafsīr Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ and elsewhere too. Also included under the purview of this command against looting and snatching are checkposts set up on thoroughfares to realize impermissible taxes against the provisions of the Sharī'ah.

'Allāmah Al-Qurṭubī has said that those who sit on thoroughfares and make people pay undue taxes against the provisions of the Sharī'ah, they too are criminals like the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - rather, more oppressive and tyrannical than they were.

After that it was said: وَتَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا (and seeking a twist in it), that is, these people are always on the lookout for the opportunity to find something in the way of Allah which they could twist, turn and misrepresent and come up with their roster of doubts and objections through which they could try to wean people away from the true religion.

In the last sentence of verse 86, it was said: وَاذْكُرُوٓا إِذْ كُنتُمْ قَلِيلًا فَكَثَّرَكُمْ وَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ (And remember the time when you were few, then He increased you in number. And look, how was the fate of mischief makers). The twin aspects of pursuasion and intimidation were employed to warn these people. The first was pursuasion when they were re-

minded of the blessing of Allah who increased their insignificant numbers to become a large nation, or changed their economic weakness into need-free financial strength. Then, to chasten them through intimidation, it was said that they could do much better if they had a look at the sad end of peoples who had engineered disorder on the earth. The peoples of Nūḥ, 'Ād, Thamūd and Lūṭ were examples of so many different punishments, which should help them understand their own situation and make the correction needed.

In the last verse (87), an answer has been given to scruples of these people about the division in their ranks after some of them believed in the call of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام while others kept rejecting him. But, there was no difference between them outwardly. Both groups were living comfortably. If being a disbeliever or denier would have been a crime, the criminal would have been punished. To answer that doubt, it was said: فَاصْبِرُوْا حَتّٰى يَحْكُمَ اللّٰهُ بَيْنَنَا that is, do not make haste. Allah Ta'ālā is Forbearing and Merciful. He gives respite to wrongdoers. It is only when they become absolutely wicked and high-handed that the decree of Allah comes into action. The state in which they were was similar. If they remained sticking to their denial, the time was not far when the decisive punishment will overtake the deniers.

Verses 88 - 93

قَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ اسْتَكْبَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكَ يٰشُعَيْبُ
وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَكَ مِنْ قَرْيَتِنَآ اَوْ لَتَعُوْدُنَّ فِيْ مِلَّتِنَا ۭ قَالَ اَوَ
لَوْ كُنَّا كٰرِهِيْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ قَدِ افْتَرَيْنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا اِنْ عُدْنَا فِيْ
مِلَّتِكُمْ بَعْدَ اِذْ نَجّٰىنَا اللّٰهُ مِنْهَا ۭ وَمَا يَكُوْنُ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّعُوْدَ
فِيْهَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَاۗءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا ۭ وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ۭ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا ۭ رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَنْتَ
خَيْرُ الْفٰتِحِيْنَ ﴿۸۹﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَاُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَوْمِهٖ لَىِٕنِ
اتَّبَعْتُمْ شُعَيْبًا اِنَّكُمْ اِذًا لَّخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿۹۰﴾ فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ
فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ ﴿۹۱﴾ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَاَنْ

لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا ۚ اَلَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوْا هُمُ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ ﴿٩٢﴾
فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ وَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ لَقَدْ اَبْلَغْتُكُمْ رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّيْ وَنَصَحْتُ
لَكُمْ فَكَيْفَ اٰسٰى عَلٰى قَوْمٍ كٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾

The chiefs of his people, who were arrogant, said, "O Shu'aib, we will expel you and those who believe with you from our town, or you shall have to turn to our faith." He said, "Even if we hate it? [88] **We will be forging a lie against Allah, if we turn to your faith after Allah has saved us from it. And it is not for us that we turn to it unless Allah, our Lord, so wills. Our Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. In Allah we place our trust. Our Lord, decide between us and our people, with truth, and You are the best of all judges."** [89]

And the chiefs of his people who disbelieved said, "If you are to follow Shu'aib, then you are sure losers." [90]

So, the earthquake seized them, and they were (found dead) in their homes fallen on their knees. [91] **Those who belied Shu'aib are as if they never dwelt there. Those who belied Shu'aib, they were themselves the losers.** [92]

So, he turned away from them and said, "O my people, I have surely delivered to you the message of my Lord, and wished your betterment. How, then, should I grieve over a disbelieving people?" [93]

Commentary

When the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام told him: Had you been on the side of truth, believers in you would have been prospering and non-believers in you would have been under punishment. But, what is actually happening is that both parties have come out equal and living a comfortable life. With this incongruity in sight, how can we take you to be true? Thereupon, the answer that Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام gave was: Do not make haste. The time is near when Allah Ta'ālā will decide the case between the two of them. Not convinced by his answer, the arrogant chiefs of those people said what is always said by oppressive practitioners of arrogance. They said: O Shu'aib, ei-

ther you and the rest of your believers return to the fold of our faith, or else, we shall throw you out of our hometown.

As for the return of ' the rest of believers in Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام to the fold of their old faith' is concerned, it is something which can be understood, for all of them were a part of the faith and way of the disbelievers. It was only later that they had embraced Islam. But, the case of Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام was different. He had never followed their false faith and way even for a day - nor can a prophet of Allah Ta'ālā ever follow a faith which is counter to pure monotheism. Why then would they be asking him to return to their faith? Perhaps, it was because Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام - before prophethood was bestowed on him - would maintain silence over their false sayings and doings and continued living among the people as one of them. Because of this, his disbelieving people took Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام too as one of the rest, a fellow-traveller and votary of their faith. It was only after he gave his call of true *'Īmān* that they discovered that his faith or religion was different from their own. Then, this led them to conclude that he had turned away from their old faith. About their warning that he must return to their old faith, Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said: أَوَلَوْ كُنَّا كَٰرِهِينَ : It means: Are you trying to say that we should return to the fold of your faith despite that we do not like it and consider it to be false? This is a manner of saying that it can never be.

In the second verse (89), Sayyidnā Shu'aib عليه السلام said to his people: Allah Ta'ālā saved us from your false faith. Now if we were to return to your faith, this would amount to a false and grim accusation by us against Allah Ta'ālā.

First of all giving *Kufr* and *Shirk* the status of faith by itself means that they have been commanded by Allah Ta'ālā - which is forging a lie against Him. In addition to that, after having believed in the revealed Truth ('Īmān) and after having its knowledge and insight, a return to *Kufr* (disbelief) would amount to saying that the first way was false and erroneous while the true and correct way was that which has been adopted later. As obvious, this is a compounded lie and accusation - that the true (*Ḥaqq*) was taken to be false (*Bāṭil*) and vice versa, the *Bāṭil* to be *Ḥaqq*.

There was a certain flavour of claim or assertion in this saying of

Sayyidna Shu'aib عليه السلام - that we can never return to your religion again. Making such a claim is, at least outwardly, contrary to the spirit of self-less submission a true servant of Allah is supposed to have (*'abdiyyah*). It does not behove those who are close to the presence of Allah and those who have come to know Him. Therefore, he said: مَا كَانَ لَنَآ اَنْ نَّعُوْدَ فِيْهَآ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ رَبُّنَا ، وَسِعَ رَبُّنَا كُلَّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ، عَلَى اللّٰهِ تَوَكَّلْنَا (And it is not for us that we turn to it unless Allah, our Lord, so wills. Our Lord encompasses everything with His knowledge. In Allah we place our trust).

This statement is a mirror of his humility (*'Ijz*), an assertion of trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*) and a confident attitude of resigning matters to Him (*Tafwid*). These are master virtues of prophets. They amount to saying: What are we and how can we claim to do something or stay away from it? To be able to do something good and to succeed in staying away from evil is nothing but the grace of Allah Ta'ala - as said by the Holy Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم:

لَوْلَا اللّٰهُ مَا اهْتَدَيْنَا وَلَا تَصَدَّقْنَا وَلَا صَلَّيْنَا

> Had there not been the grace of Allah Ta'ala, we would have not been guided right, nor been able to give in charity, nor to make Salah.

It was due to this quality of trusting in Allah alone that when, after having talked to the arrogant chiefs of the people, Sayyidna Shu'aib عليه السلام realized that nothing seems to move these people in any manner whatsoever, he stopped addressing them and made the following *Du'a'* (prayer) to Allah Ta'ala: رَبَّنَا افْتَحْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ قَوْمِنَا بِالْحَقِّ وَاَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْفٰتِحِيْنَ (Our Lord, decide between us and our people, with truth, and You are the best of all judges). Sayyidna 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas رضى الله عنه has said that the word: فَتْح (*fath*) means 'decide' at this place. That is how the word: فَاتِح (*fatih*) takes the sense of Qadi or judge.

And in reality, through these words, Sayyidna Shu'aib عليه السلام had prayed for the destruction of the disbelievers from among his people - which was answered by Allah Ta'ala when they were destroyed by an earthquake.

Reported in the third verse (90) is a misleading statement of the arrogant chiefs of the people of Sayyidna Shu'aib عليه السلام which they made while talking among themselves, or said that to their followers:

that is, 'if you are to follow Shu'aib, then you are sure losers.' (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ from 'Aṭā')

The account of the punishment of these wicked people was given in the fourth verse (91) in the following words: فَاَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَاَصْبَحُوْا فِيْ دَارِهِمْ جٰثِمِيْنَ (So, the earthquake seized them, and they were [found dead] in their homes fallen on their knees).

The punishment of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیه السلام has been identified as earthquake (*Rajfah, Zalzalah*) while in other verses it appears as: فَاَخَذَهُمْ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ (26:189) which means that they were seized by the punishment of *Yowm aẓ-Ẓullah*. *Yowm aẓ-Ẓullah* means day of the shade. It refers to what happened to them when to come on them first was the shade of a deep and thick cloud under which they all assembled. Then, from this very cloud, stones or fire was rained down.

To accodmodate and reconcile the sense of the two verses given above, Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh ibn 'Abbās رضی اللہ عنہ has said: First of all, the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیه السلام were subjected to such intense heat, as if the door of Hell has been thrown open towards them. This made them suffocate. Shade or water, nothing seemed to work. Driven by heat, they went into basements. They were more hot. With no choice left, they ran from the city into the nearby forest. There, Allah Ta'ālā sent a thick cloud with cool breeze passing underneath. Out of their senses under the impact of heat, they all rushed for refuge under the shade of that cloud. At that time, the whole cloud became a cloud of fire raining on them and also came the earthquake which turned them to ashes. In this manner, the punishments of the earthquake and the shade had simultaneously converged on these people. (Al-Baḥr Al-Muḥīṭ)

Some commentators have said that it is also possible that the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیه السلام were split in different groups or sections where some were hit by the earthquake while others were destroyed by the punishment of the shade.

In verse 92, the fate of the people of Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیه السلام has been cited as a lesson - which is the real purpose behind the description of this event. It was said: اَلَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَاَنْ لَّمْ يَغْنَوْا فِيْهَا (Those who belied Shu'aib are as if they never dwelt there). One of the meanings of the

word: غِنٰى (*ghinā*) is to live at some place in peace and comfort. At this place, this is the meaning intended. The sense of the sentence is that the homes where they lived in peace and comfort, turned so deserted after this punishment as if peace and comfort had never existed there. Then, it was said: اَلَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا شُعَيْبًا كَانُوْاهُمُ الْخٰسِرِيْنَ (Those who belied Shu'aib were themselves the losers). The hint given is that these were the people threatening to throw Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیہ السلام and his believing companions out from their city, but, in the end, the loss hit none but them.

In the sixth (93) verse, it was said: فَتَوَلّٰى عَنْهُمْ (So, he turned away from them). It means that, with punishment for his people in sight, Sayyidnā Shu'aib علیہ السلام and his believing companions moved away from there. The majority of commentators says that these blessed souls left this place for Makkah al-Mu'aẓẓamah where they stayed till the end.

It was his total disappointment with his people neck-deep in disobedience and contumacy which prompted him to pray that they be chastened. But, when the actual punishment came as a result of it, his heart pinched because of his prophetic concern and affection for them. Then, it was for the peace of his own heart that he said addressing his people: 'O my people, I have surely delivered to you the messages of my Lord, and wished you betterment. How, then, should I grieve over a disbelieving people?'

The Commentary
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Sūrah Al-A'rāf
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